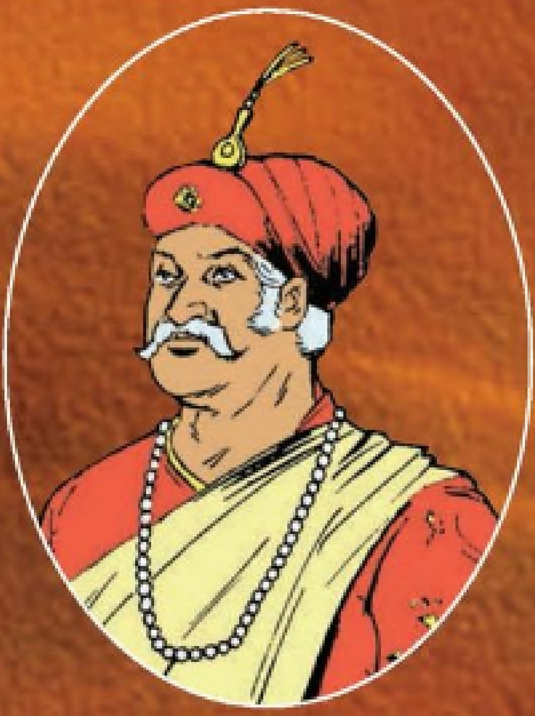
Administrators



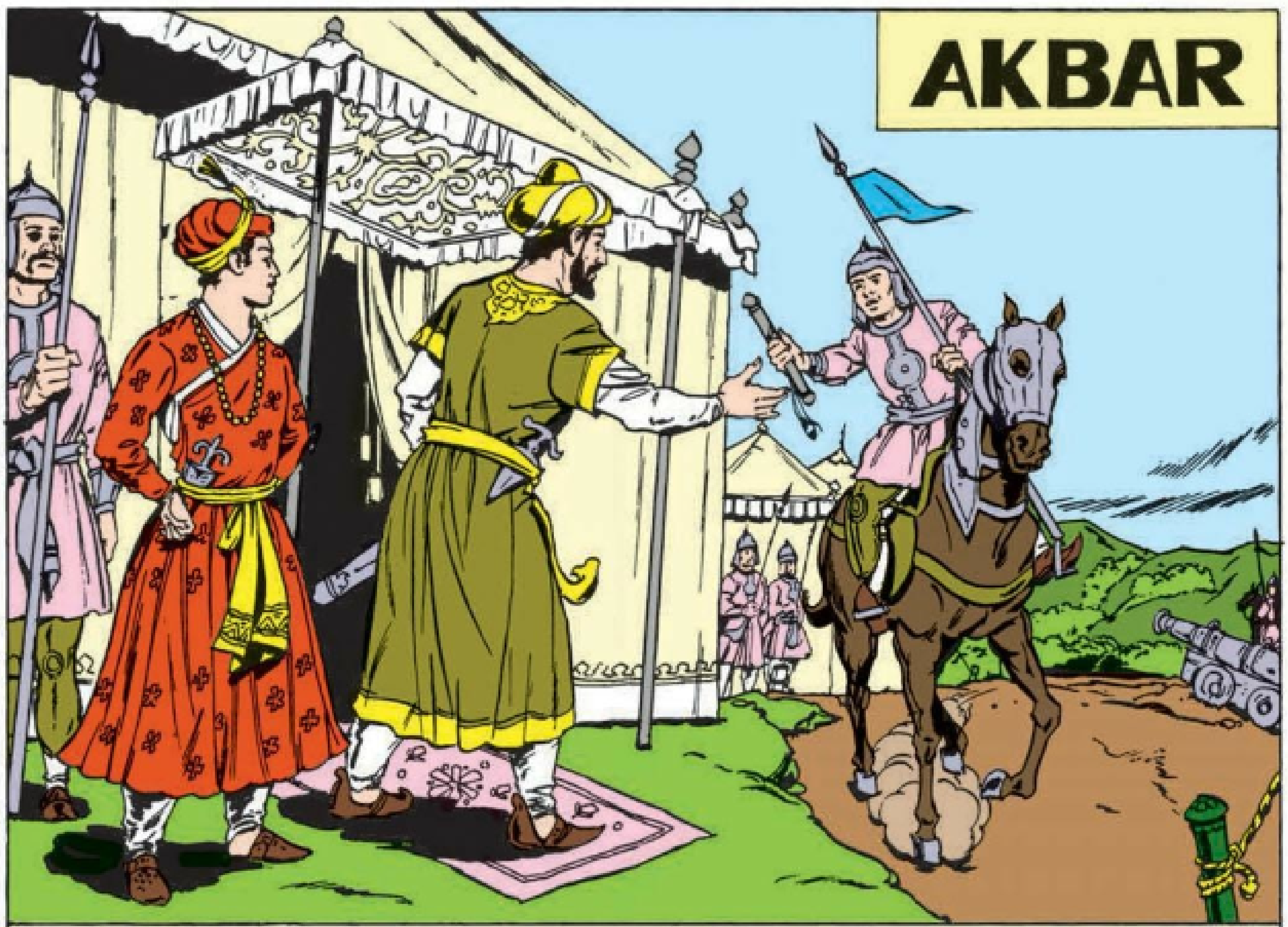
Akbar is said to have wandered through his kingdom dressed as a commoner, to find out if his subjects were truly happy or not.

Ahilyabai Holkar is remembered for being a generous and supportive queen – she built roads, forts, wells and rest-houses. Her devotion to her subjects' welfare was such that she even ordered her own son punished, for crimes against the people.

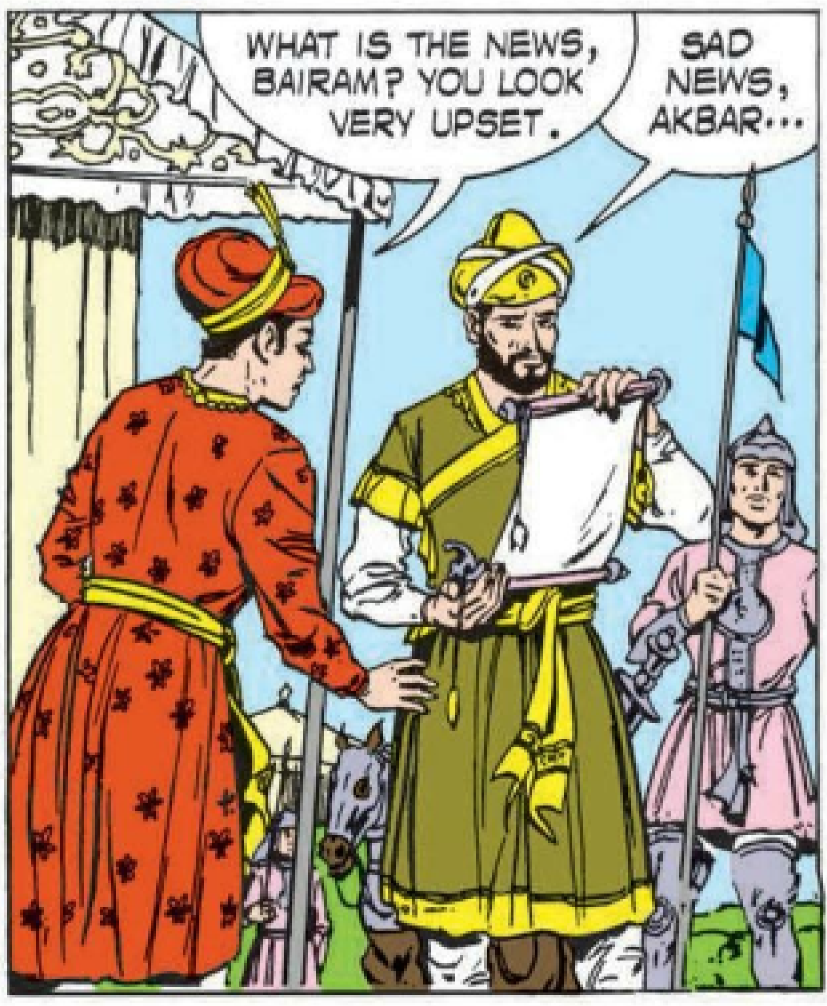
The emperor of the Vijayanagara Empire, Krishnadeva Raya was regarded as the most powerful Hindu rulers of his time. He was believed to be gifted administrator and an exceptional general and his rule marked a period of military success in the empire's history.

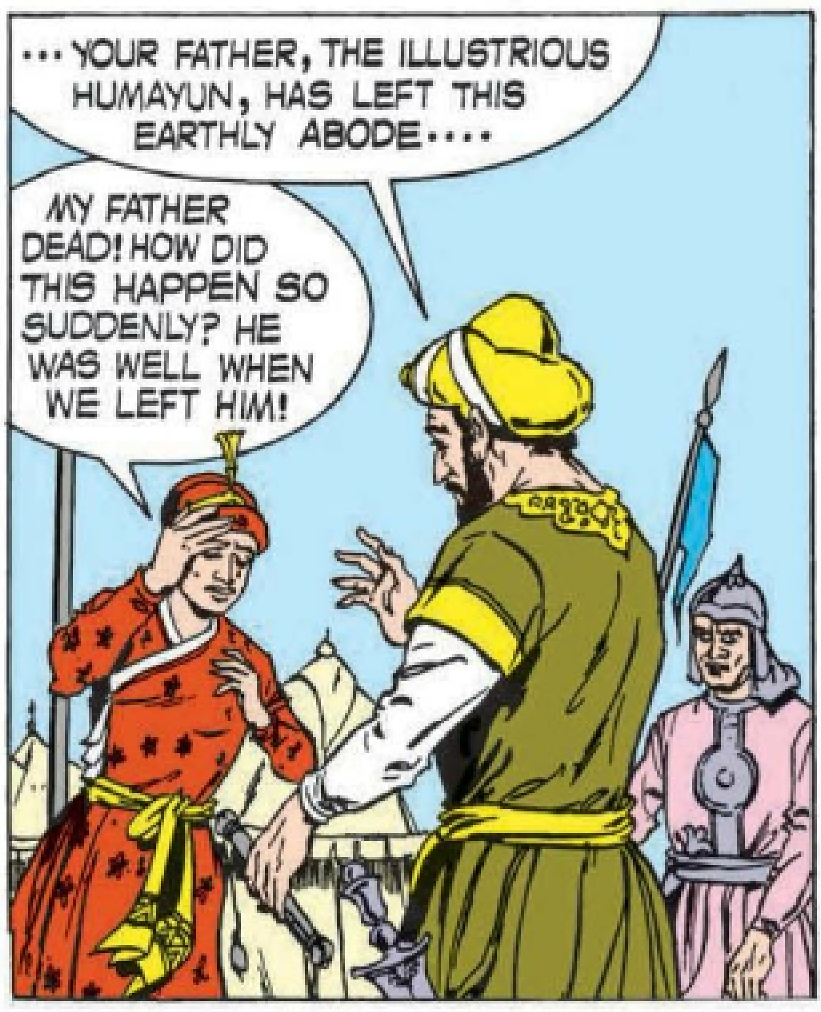
Winning a kingdom takes one kind of expertise but administering it is an entirely different skill. These rulers combined justice, mercy and an open mind to reconcile the many different kinds of people in their kingdoms, making sure everyone was happy.

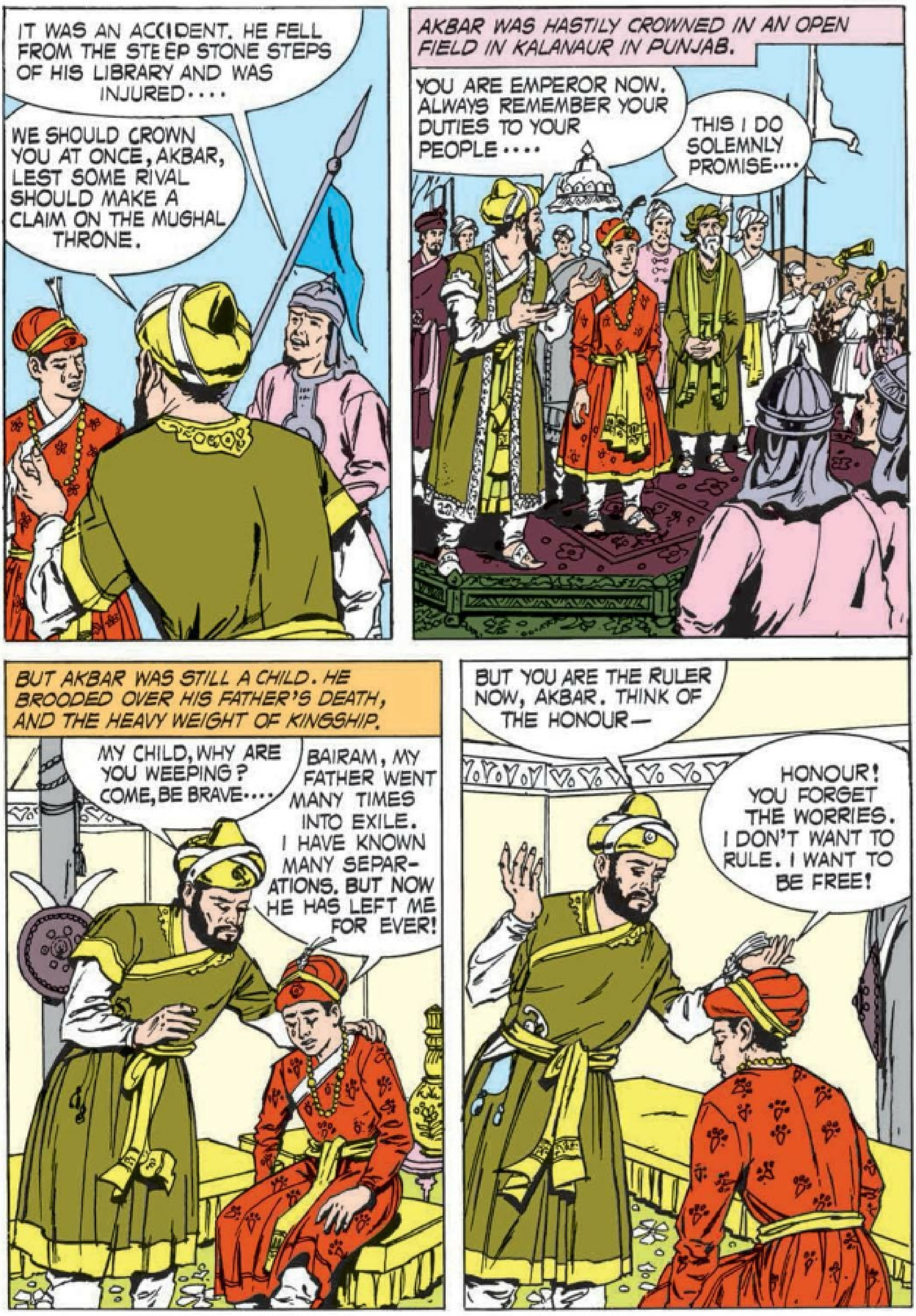
AKBAR

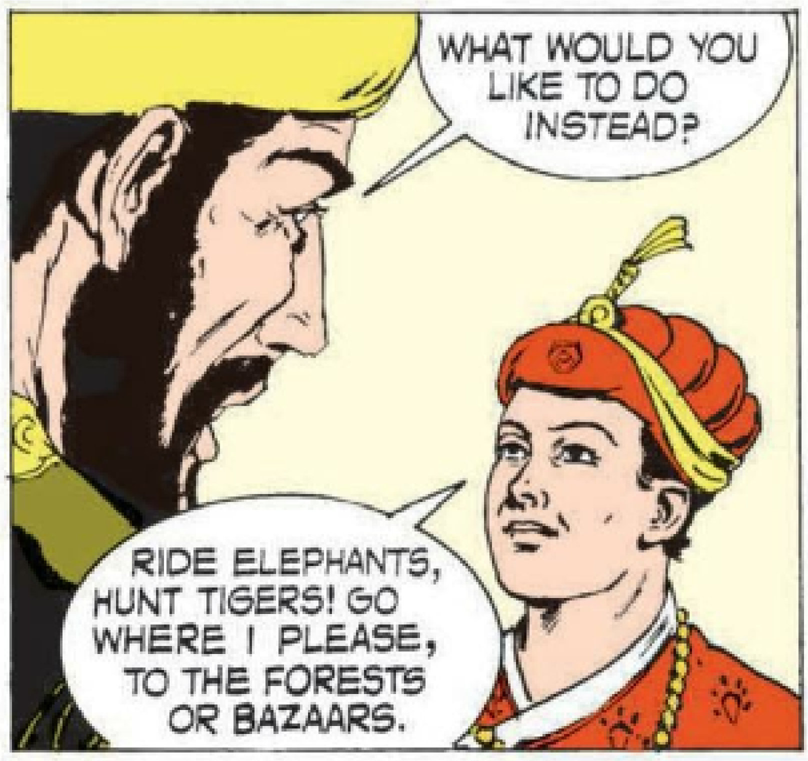


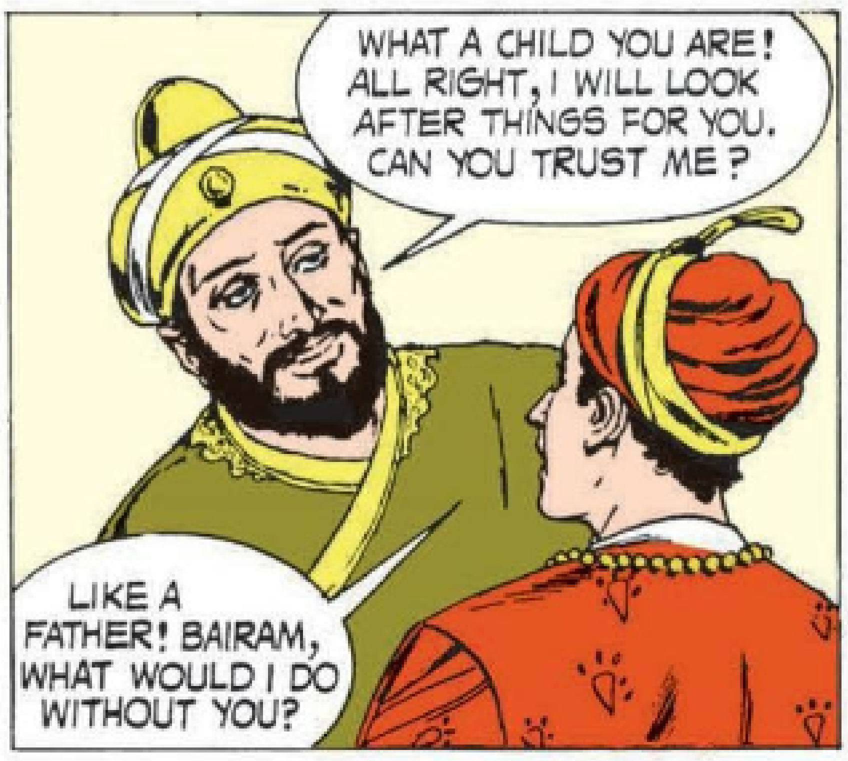
IN THE YEAR 1556, AKBAR WAS JUST THIRTEEN YEARS OLD. YET HIS MILITARY TRAINING HAD ALREADY BEGUN. HIS FATHER, HUMAYUN, THE MUGHAL EMPEROR, HAD SENT HIM WITH HIS FAITHFUL GENERAL, BAIRAM KHAN, TO FIGHT IN PUNJAB AGAINST THEIR ENEMY, SIKANDAR SHAH.


WHAT IS THE NEWS, BAIRAM? YOU LOOK VERY UPSET.
SAD NEWS, AKBAR...

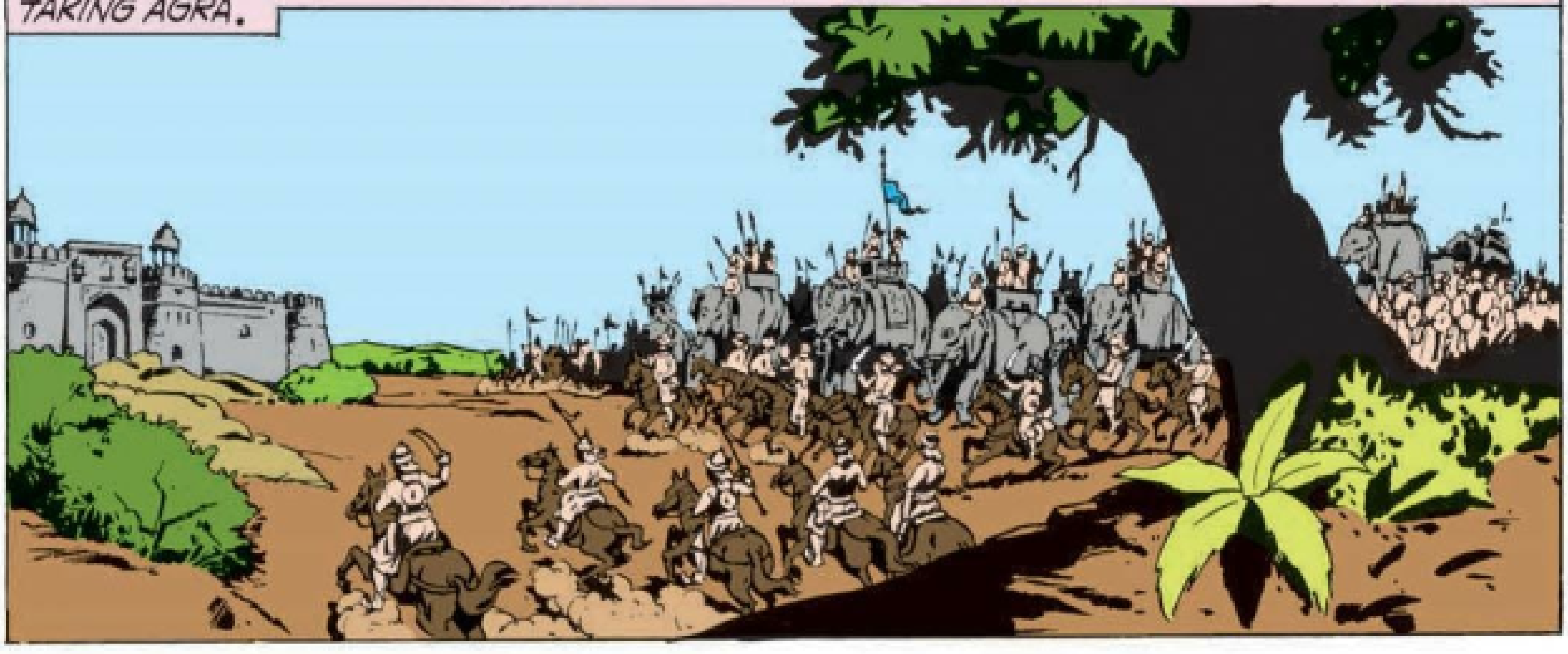

...YOUR FATHER, THE ILLUSTRIOUS HUMAYUN, HAS LEFT THIS EARTHLY ABODE....
MY FATHER DEAD! HOW DID THIS HAPPEN SO SUDDENLY? HE WAS WELL WHEN WE LEFT HIM!


IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. HE FELL FROM THE STEEP STONE STEPS OF HIS LIBRARY AND WAS INJURED....
WE SHOULD CROWN YOU AT ONCE, AKBAR, LEST SOME RIVAL SHOULD MAKE A CLAIM ON THE MUGHAL THRONE.
AKBAR WAS HASTILY CROWNED IN AN OPEN FIELD IN KALANAUR IN PUNJAB.
YOU ARE EMPEROR NOW. ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR DUTIES TO YOUR PEOPLE....
THIS I DO SOLEMNLY PROMISE....
BUT AKBAR WAS STILL A CHILD. HE BROODED OVER HIS FATHER'S DEATH, AND THE HEAVY WEIGHT OF KINGSHIP.
MY CHILD, WHY ARE YOU WEEPING? COME, BE BRAVE....
BAIRAM, MY FATHER WENT MANY TIMES INTO EXILE. I HAVE KNOWN MANY SEPARATIONS. BUT NOW HE HAS LEFT ME FOR EVER!
BUT YOU ARE THE RULER NOW, AKBAR. THINK OF THE HONOUR—
HONOUR! YOU FORGET THE WORRIES. I DON'T WANT TO RULE. I WANT TO BE FREE!

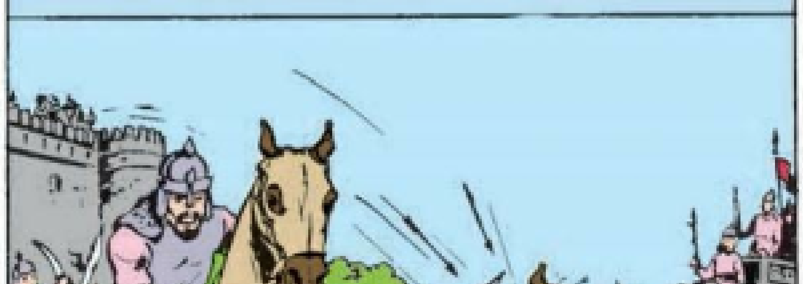

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO INSTEAD?
RIDE ELEPHANTS, HUNT TIGERS! GO WHERE I PLEASE, TO THE FORESTS OR BAZAARS.


WHAT A CHILD YOU ARE! ALL RIGHT, I WILL LOOK AFTER THINGS FOR YOU. CAN YOU TRUST ME?
LIKE A FATHER! BAIRAM, WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT YOU?

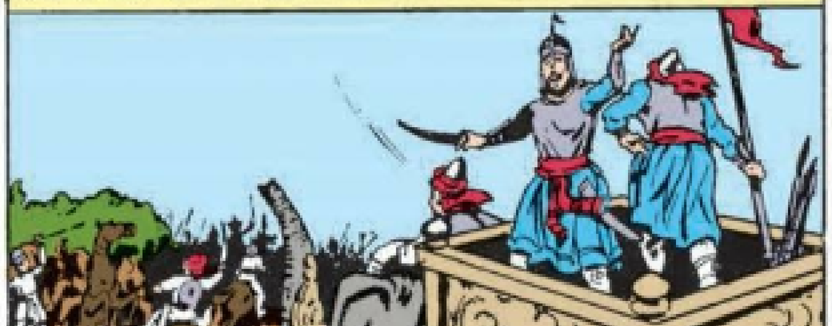
WHILE BAIRAM, WITH AKBAR, WAS DIRECTING THE CAMPAIGN IN PUNJAB, AN ALARMING EVENT WAS TAKING PLACE AT THE CAPITAL. HEMU, THE HINDU GENERAL, HAD MARCHED TO DELHI, AFTER TAKING AGRA.

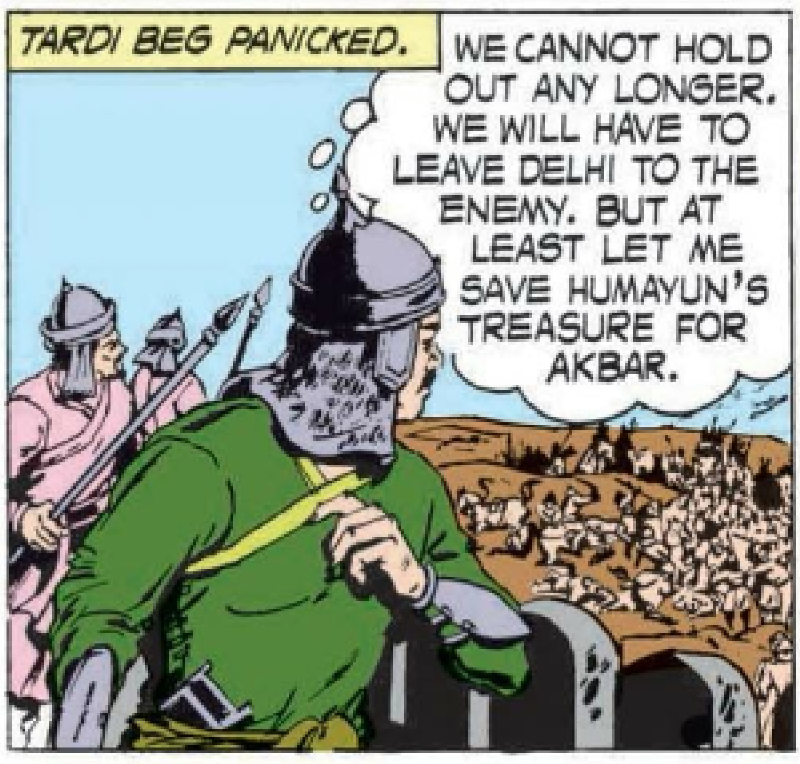


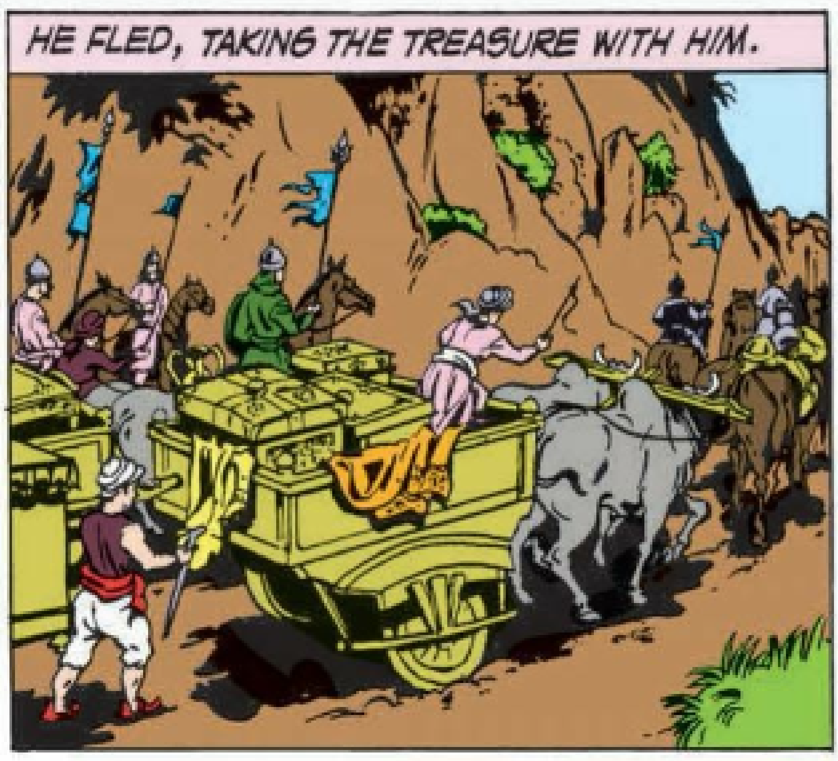
TARDI BEG, THE MUGHAL GOVERNOR OF DELHI, PUT UP A VALIANT DEFENCE AND ROUTED HEMU'S ADVANCE GUARD.

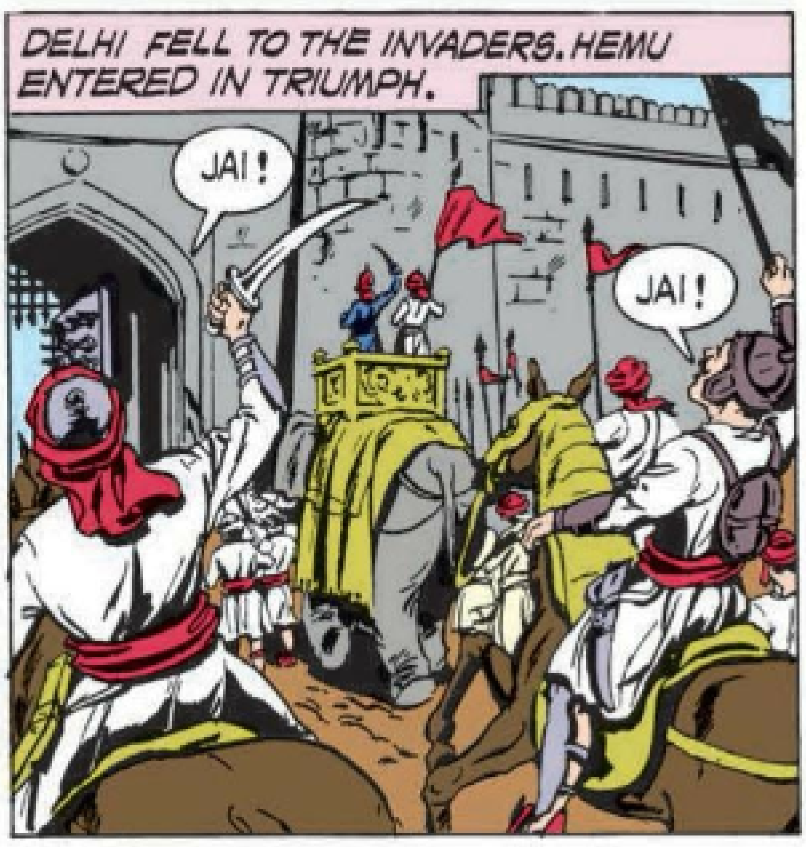


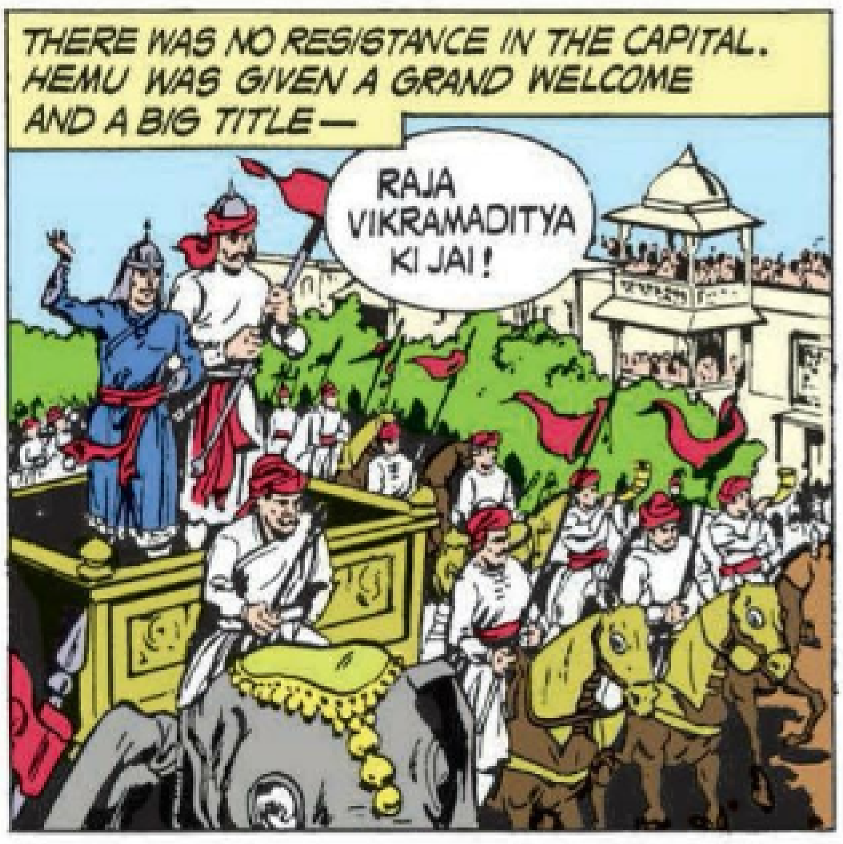
BUT HEMU MADE A SUDDEN FIERCE ATTACK ON THE MUGHAL CENTRE.

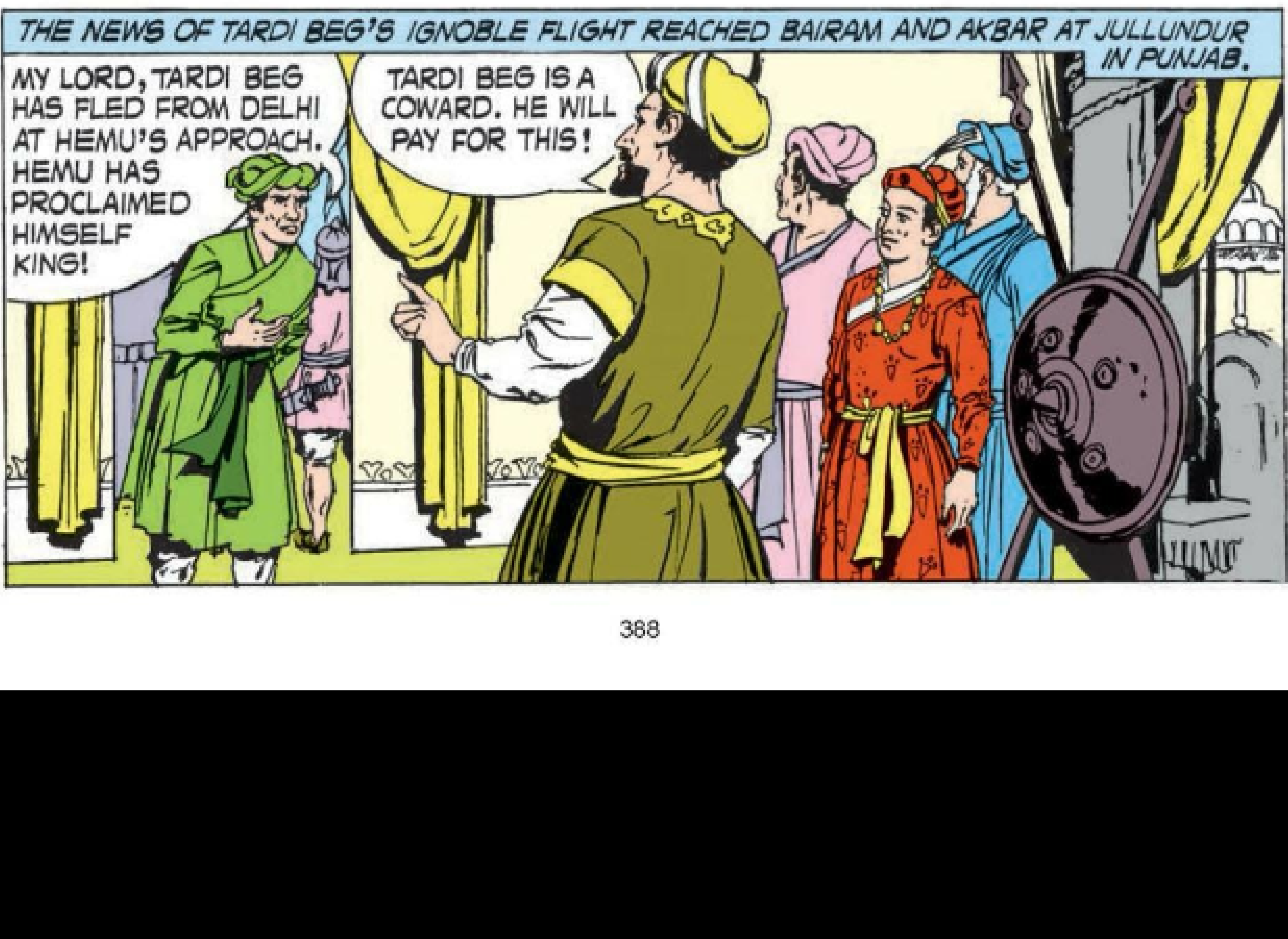


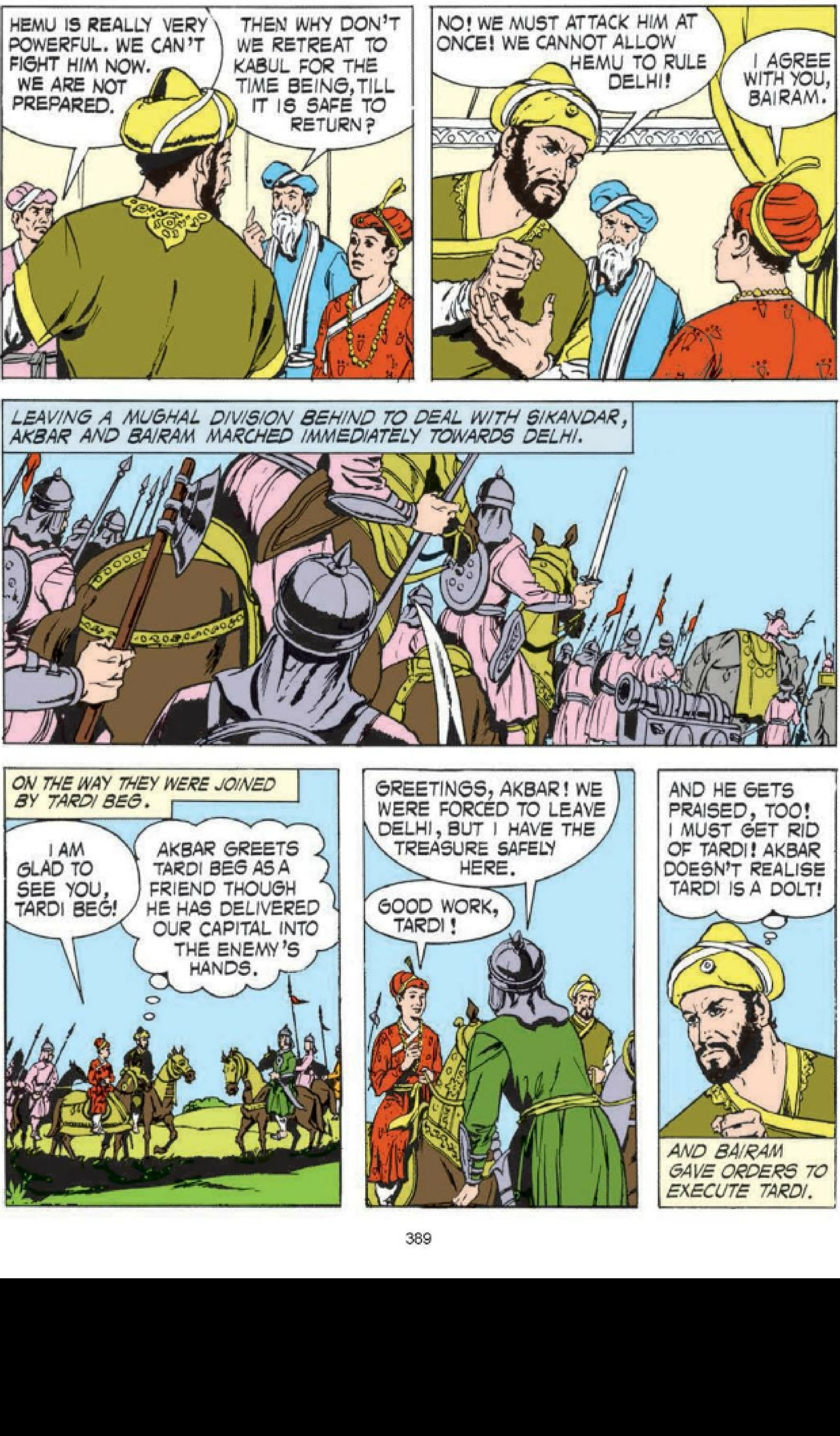

TARDI BEG PANICKED.
WE CANNOT HOLD OUT ANY LONGER. WE WILL HAVE TO LEAVE DELHI TO THE ENEMY. BUT AT LEAST LET ME SAVE HUMAYUN'S TREASURE FOR AKBAR.

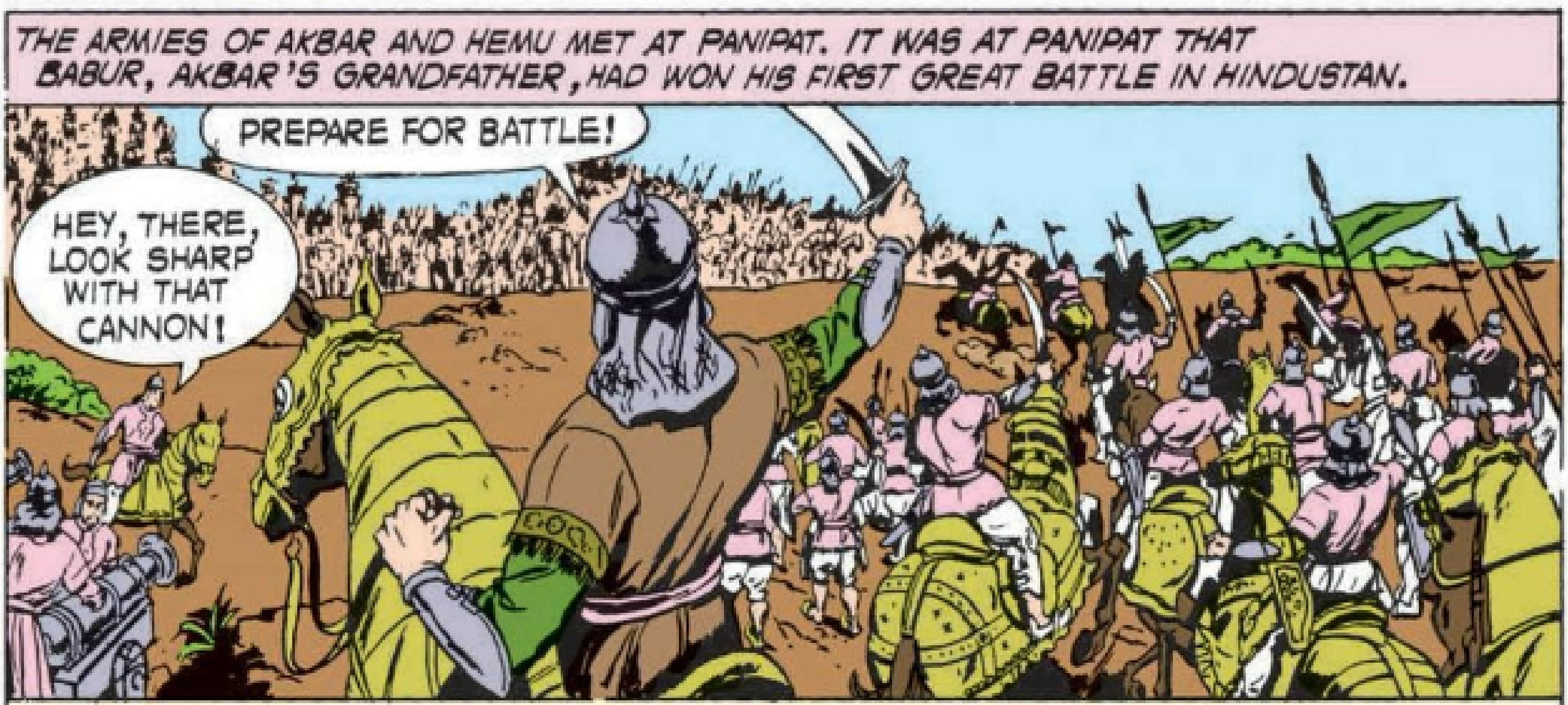

HE FLED, TAKING THE TREASURE WITH HIM.

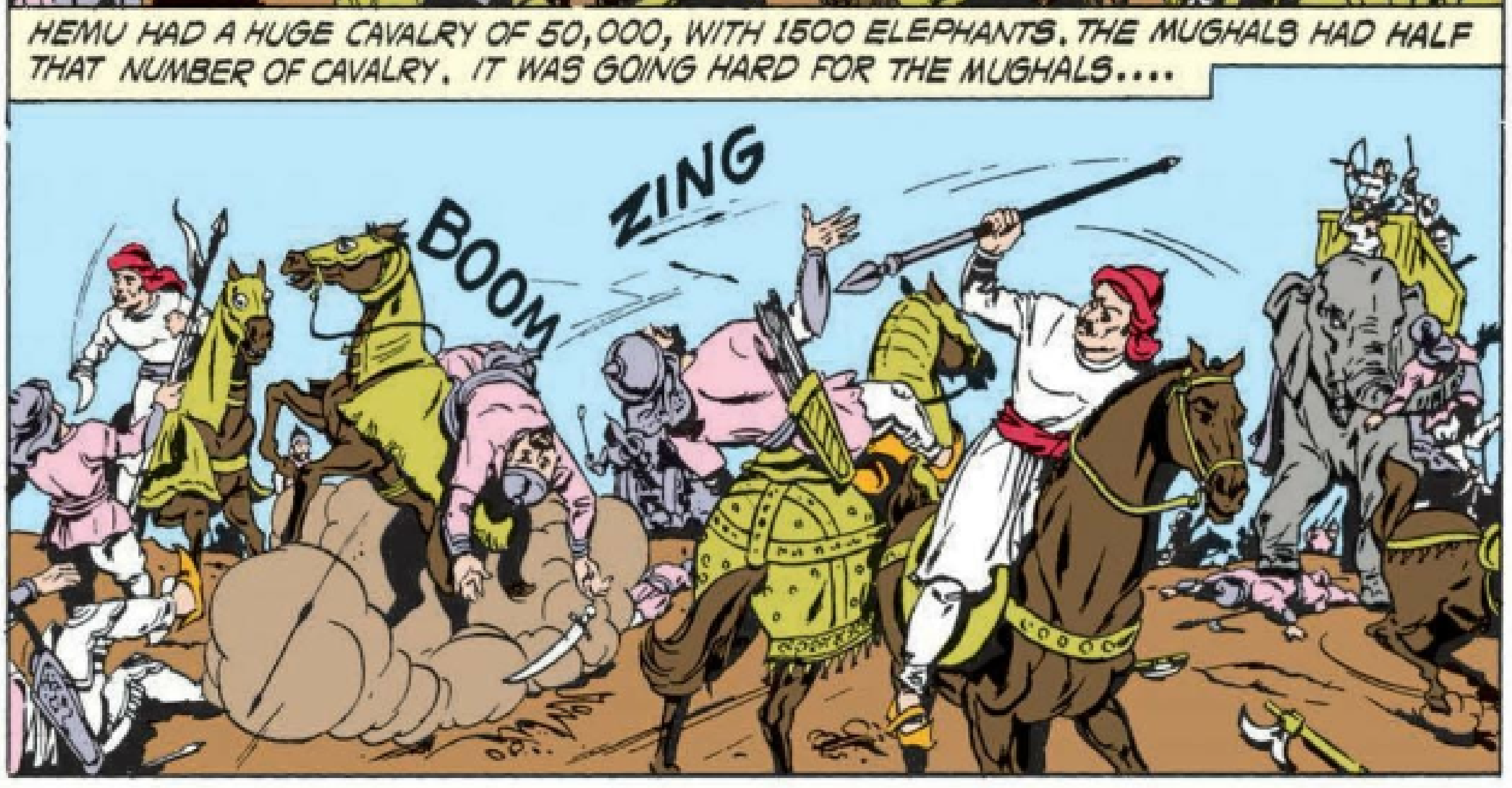

DELHI FELL TO THE INVADERS. HEMU ENTERED IN TRIUMPH.
JAI!
JAI!

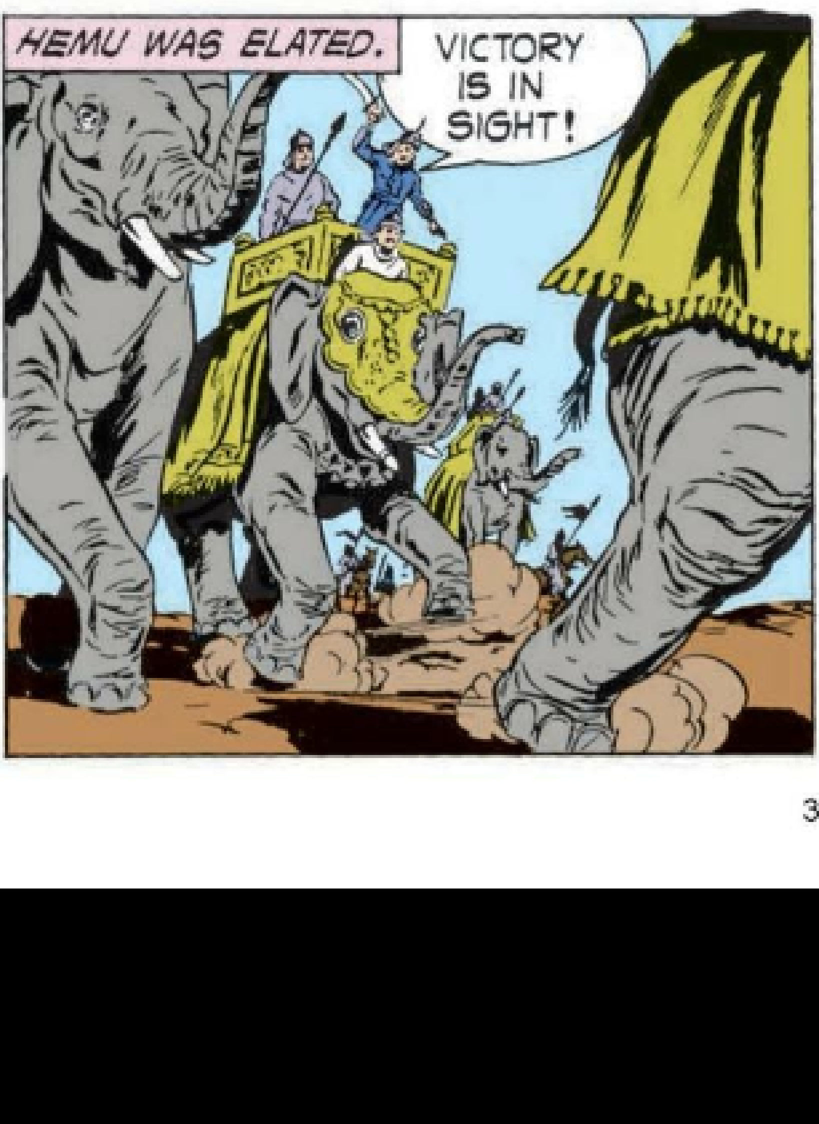

THERE WAS NO RESISTANCE IN THE CAPITAL. HEMU WAS GIVEN A GRAND WELCOME AND A BIG TITLE—
RAJA VIKRAMADITYA KI JAI!

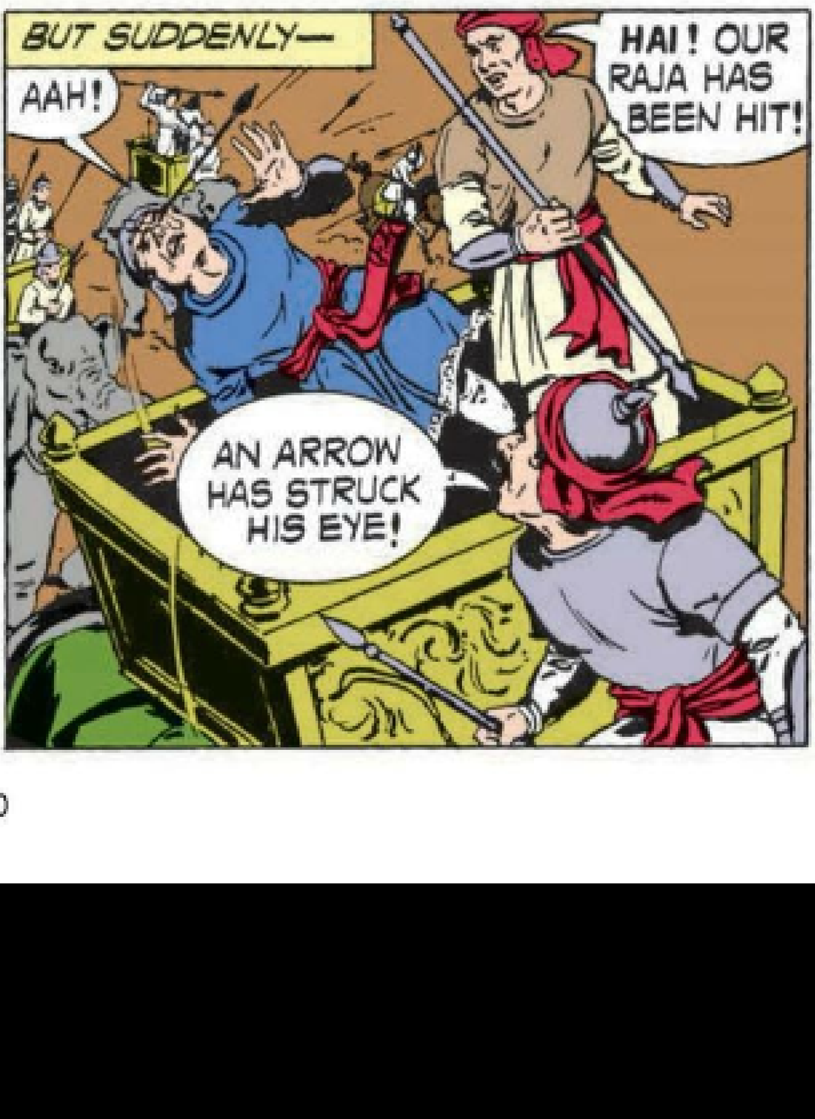

THE NEWS OF TARDI BEG'S IGNOBLE FLIGHT REACHED BAIRAM AND AKBAR AT JULLUNDUR IN PUNJAB.
MY LORD, TARDI BEG HAS FLED FROM DELHI AT HEMU'S APPROACH. HEMU HAS PROCLAIMED HIMSELF KING!
TARDI BEG IS A COWARD. HE WILL PAY FOR THIS!

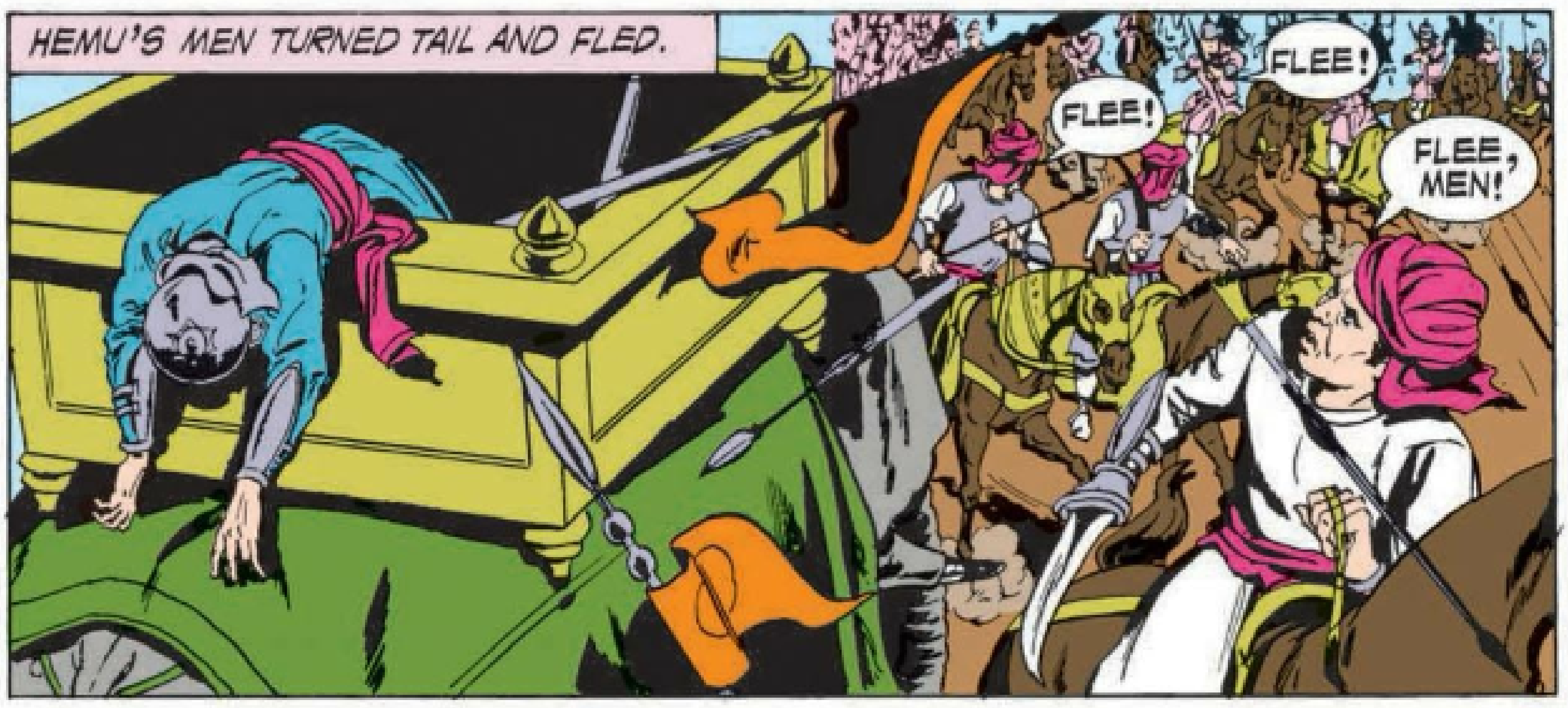

HEMU IS REALLY VERY POWERFUL. WE CAN'T FIGHT HIM NOW. WE ARE NOT PREPARED.
THEN WHY DON'T WE RETREAT TO KABUL FOR THE TIME BEING, TILL IT IS SAFE TO RETURN?
NO! WE MUST ATTACK HIM AT ONCE! WE CANNOT ALLOW HEMU TO RULE DELHI!
I AGREE WITH YOU, BAIRAM.
LEAVING A MUGHAL DIVISION BEHIND TO DEAL WITH SIKANDAR, AKBAR AND BAIRAM MARCHED IMMEDIATELY TOWARDS DELHI.
ON THE WAY THEY WERE JOINED BY TARDI BEG.
I AM GLAD TO SEE YOU, TARDI BEG!
AKBAR GREETS TARDI BEG AS A FRIEND THOUGH HE HAS DELIVERED OUR CAPITAL INTO THE ENEMY'S HANDS.
GREETINGS, AKBAR! WE WERE FORCED TO LEAVE DELHI, BUT I HAVE THE TREASURE SAFELY HERE.
GOOD WORK, TARDI!
AND HE GETS PRAISED, TOO! I MUST GET RID OF TARDI! AKBAR DOESN'T REALISE TARDI IS A DOLT!
AND BAIRAM GAVE ORDERS TO EXECUTE TARDI.

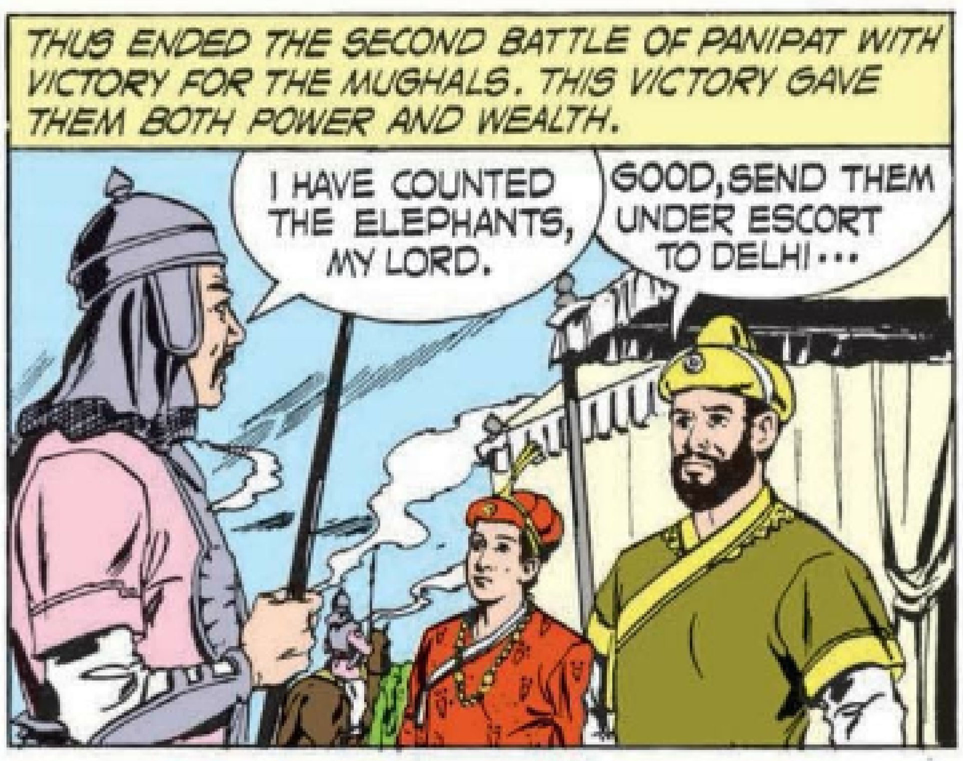

THE ARMIES OF AKBAR AND HEMU MET AT PANIPAT. IT WAS AT PANIPAT THAT BABUR, AKBAR'S GRANDFATHER, HAD WON HIS FIRST GREAT BATTLE IN HINDUSTAN.
PREPARE FOR BATTLE!
HEY, THERE, LOOK SHARP WITH THAT CANNON!

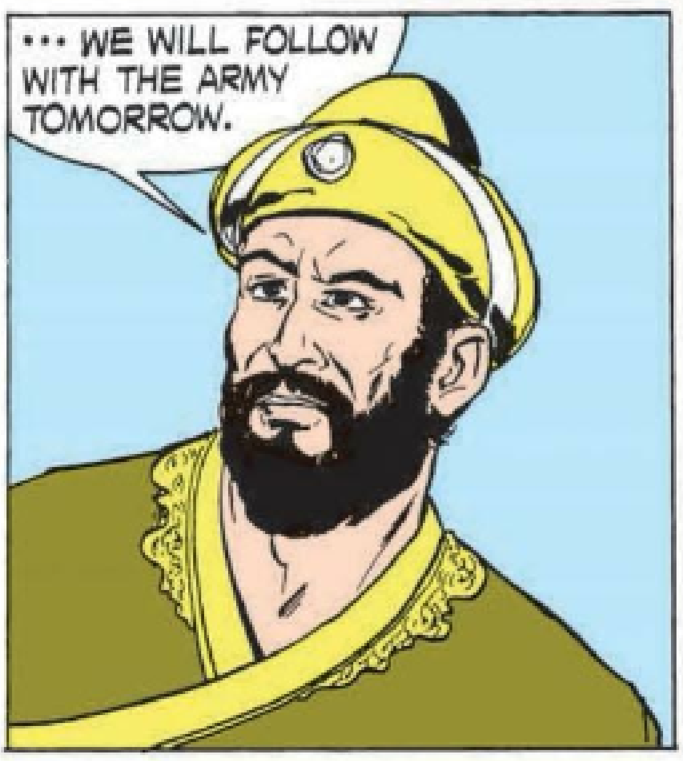

HEMU HAD A HUGE CAVALRY OF 50,000, WITH 1500 ELEPHANTS. THE MUGHALS HAD HALF THAT NUMBER OF CAVALRY. IT WAS GOING HARD FOR THE MUGHALS....
BOOM
ZING

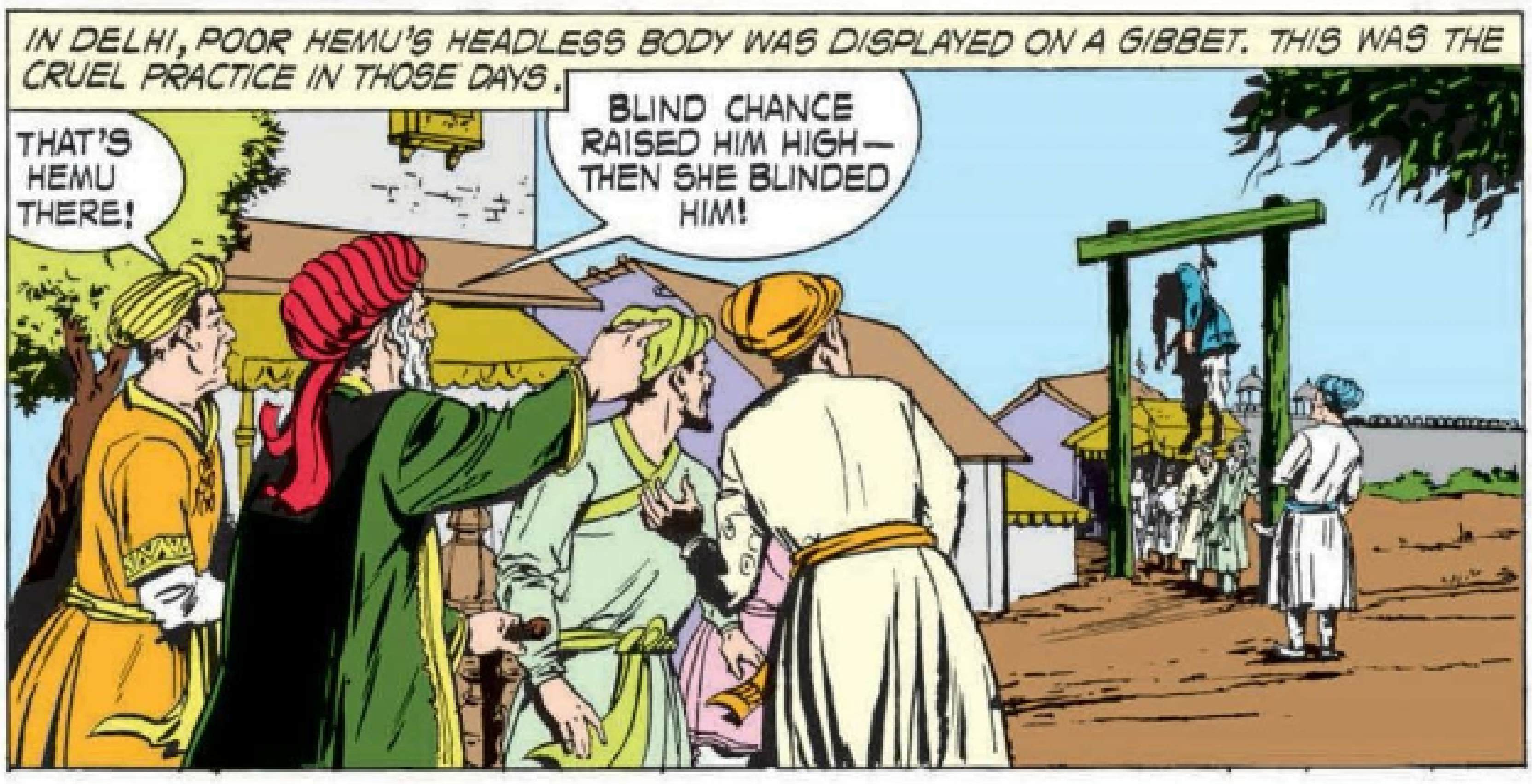

HEMU WAS ELATED.
VICTORY IS IN SIGHT!

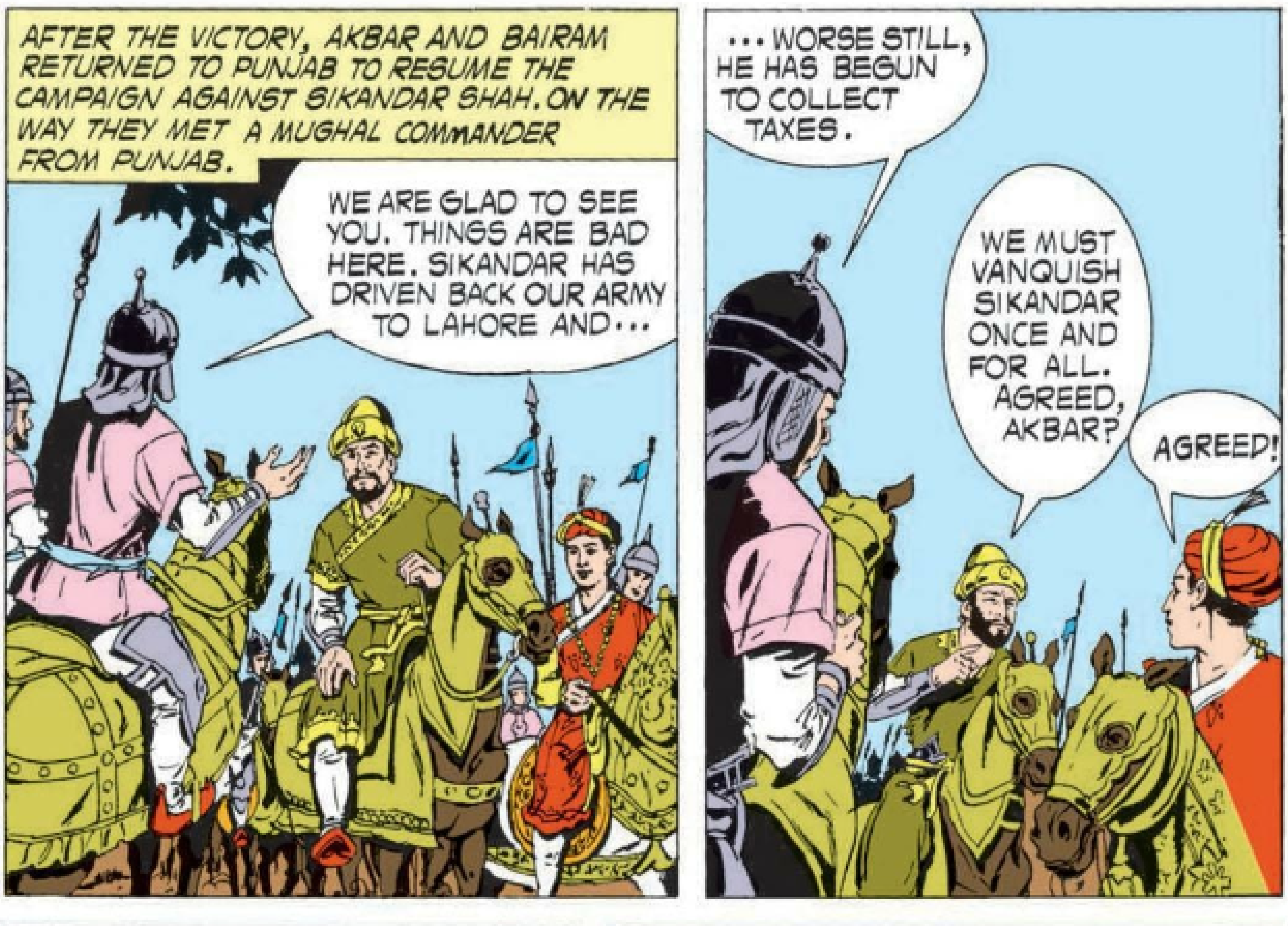

BUT SUDDENLY—
AAH!
HAI! OUR RAJA HAS BEEN HIT!
AN ARROW HAS STRUCK HIS EYE!


HEMU'S MEN TURNED TAIL AND FLED.
FLEE!
FLEE!
FLEE, MEN!


THUS ENDED THE SECOND BATTLE OF PANIPAT WITH VICTORY FOR THE MUGHALS. THIS VICTORY GAVE THEM BOTH POWER AND WEALTH.
I HAVE COUNTED THE ELEPHANTS, MY LORD.
GOOD, SEND THEM UNDER ESCORT TO DELHI...


...WE WILL FOLLOW WITH THE ARMY TOMORROW.


IN DELHI, POOR HEMU'S HEADLESS BODY WAS DISPLAYED ON A GIBBET. THIS WAS THE CRUEL PRACTICE IN THOSE DAYS.
THAT'S HEMU THERE!
BLIND CHANCE RAISED HIM HIGH— THEN SHE BLINDED HIM!



AFTER THE VICTORY, AKBAR AND BAIRAM RETURNED TO PUNJAB TO RESUME THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SIKANDAR SHAH. ON THE WAY THEY MET A MUGHAL COMMANDER FROM PUNJAB.

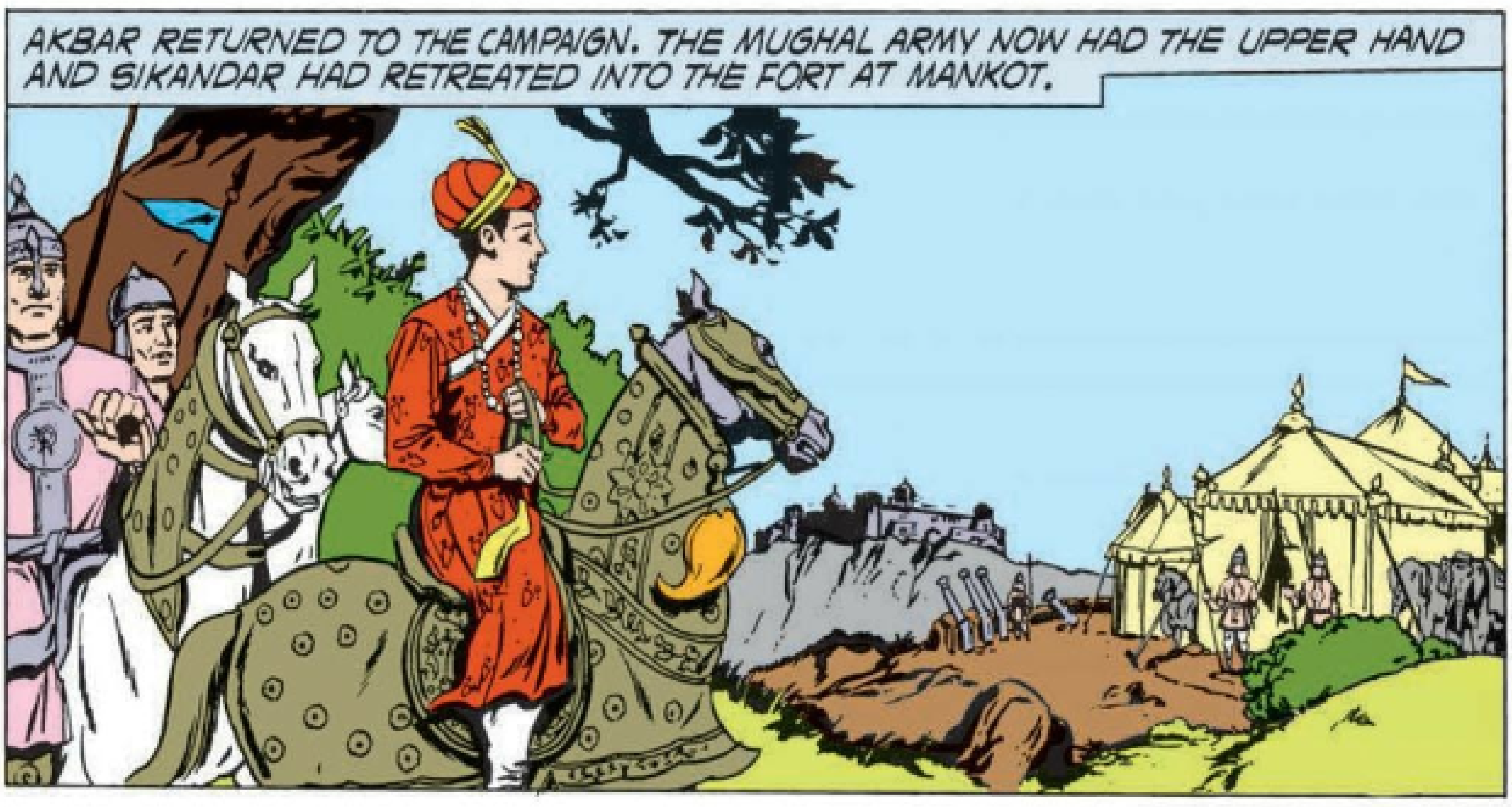
WE ARE GLAD TO SEE YOU. THINGS ARE BAD HERE. SIKANDAR HAS DRIVEN BACK OUR ARMY TO LAHORE AND...
...WORSE STILL, HE HAS BEGUN TO COLLECT TAXES.
WE MUST VANQUISH SIKANDAR ONCE AND FOR ALL. AGREED, AKBAR?
AGREED!

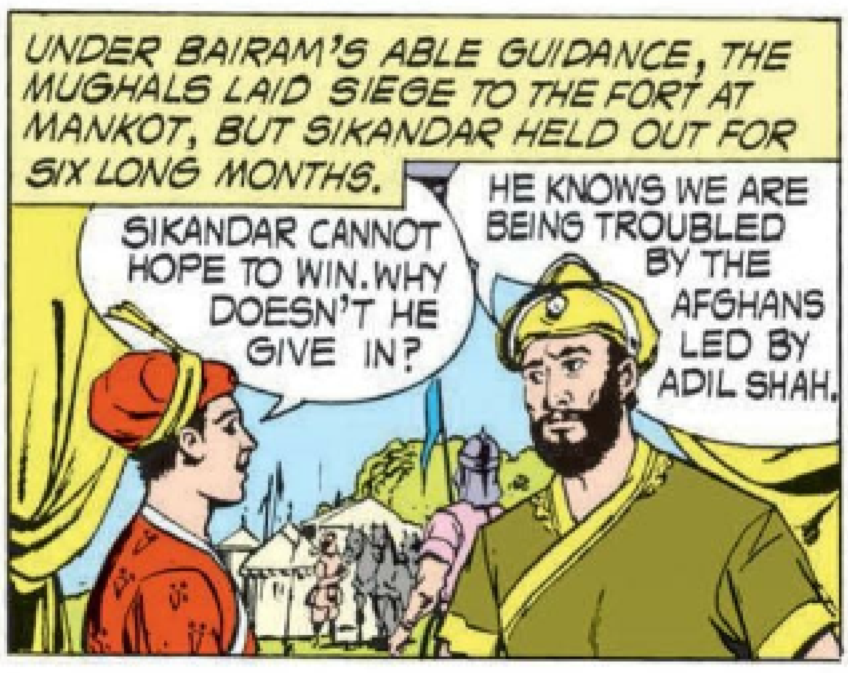
MEANWHILE, THE LADIES OF AKBAR'S HAREM, WHO HAD BEEN SENT TO KABUL FOR SAFETY, HEARD THE NEWS OF THE VICTORY AT PANIPAT. AMONG THEM WAS AKBAR'S MOTHER, HAMIDA, AND HIS AUNT.

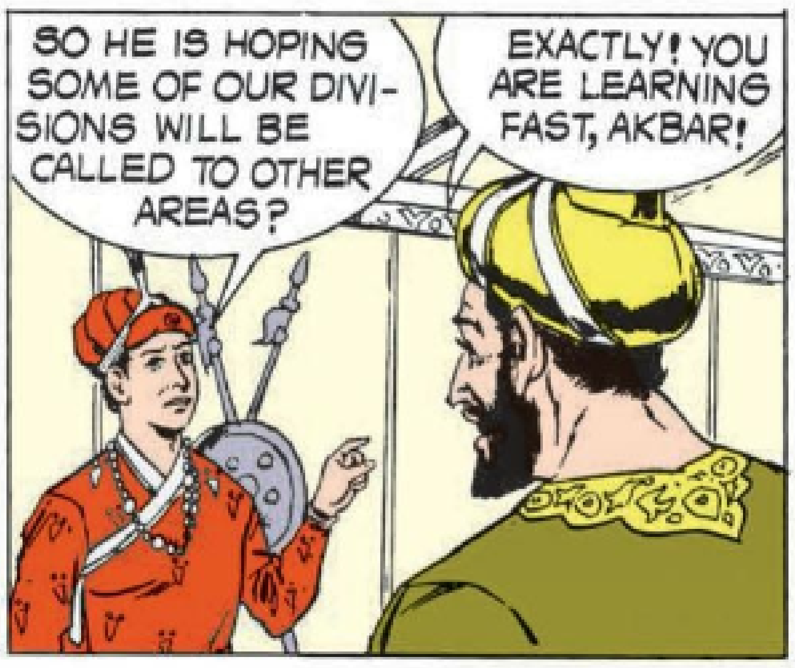
AT LAST! WE CAN RETURN TO HINDUSTAN! HAMIDA, I AM HAPPY!
WHAT A PLEASURE IT WILL BE TO SEE MY DEAR BOY, AKBAR!

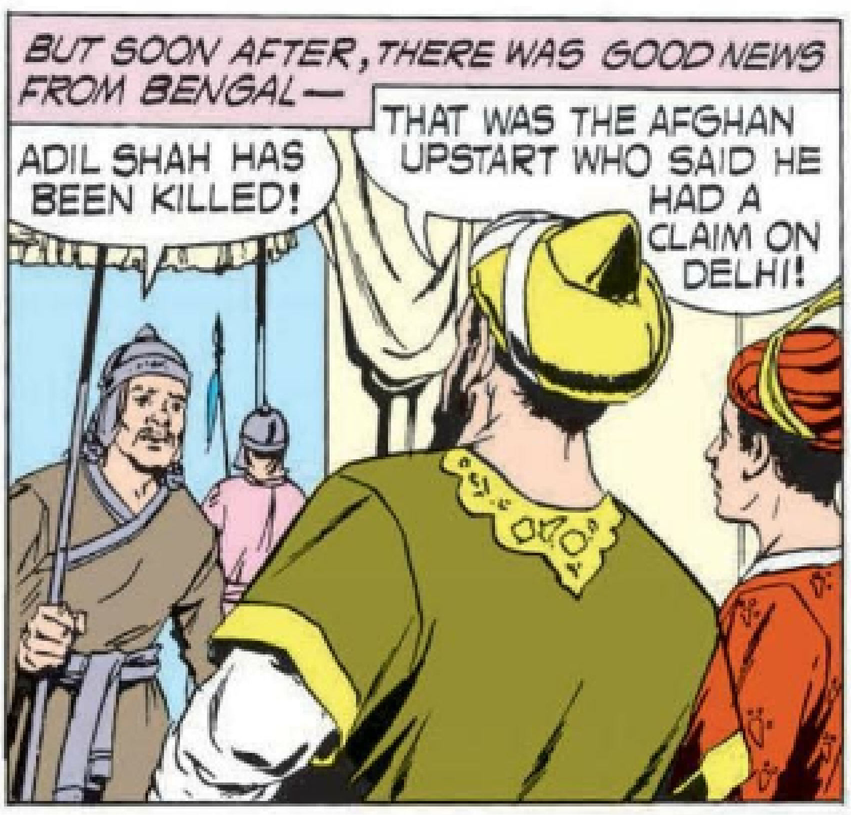
THE MUGHAL LADIES JOURNEYED BACK TO DELHI. AKBAR LEFT HIS DIVISION IN PUNJAB AND RODE A DAY'S JOURNEY TO MEET THEM.

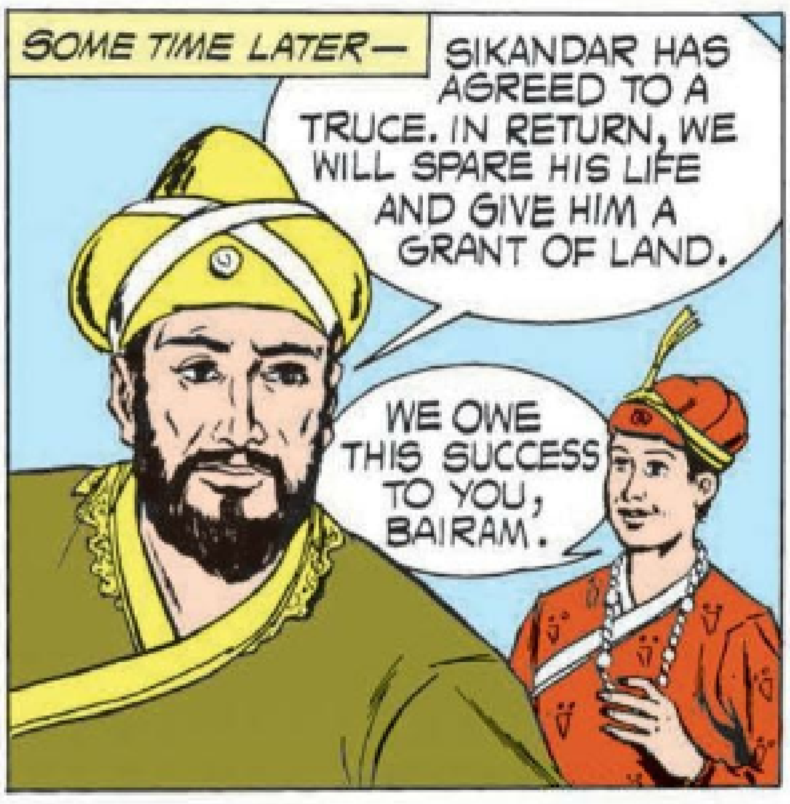
MY SON, YOU HAVE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO RETURN!
YOU ARE COURAGEOUS AND BRAVE!
MOTHER, IT WAS POSSIBLE ONLY WITH BAIRAM'S HELP. I OWE HIM A GREAT DEAL.

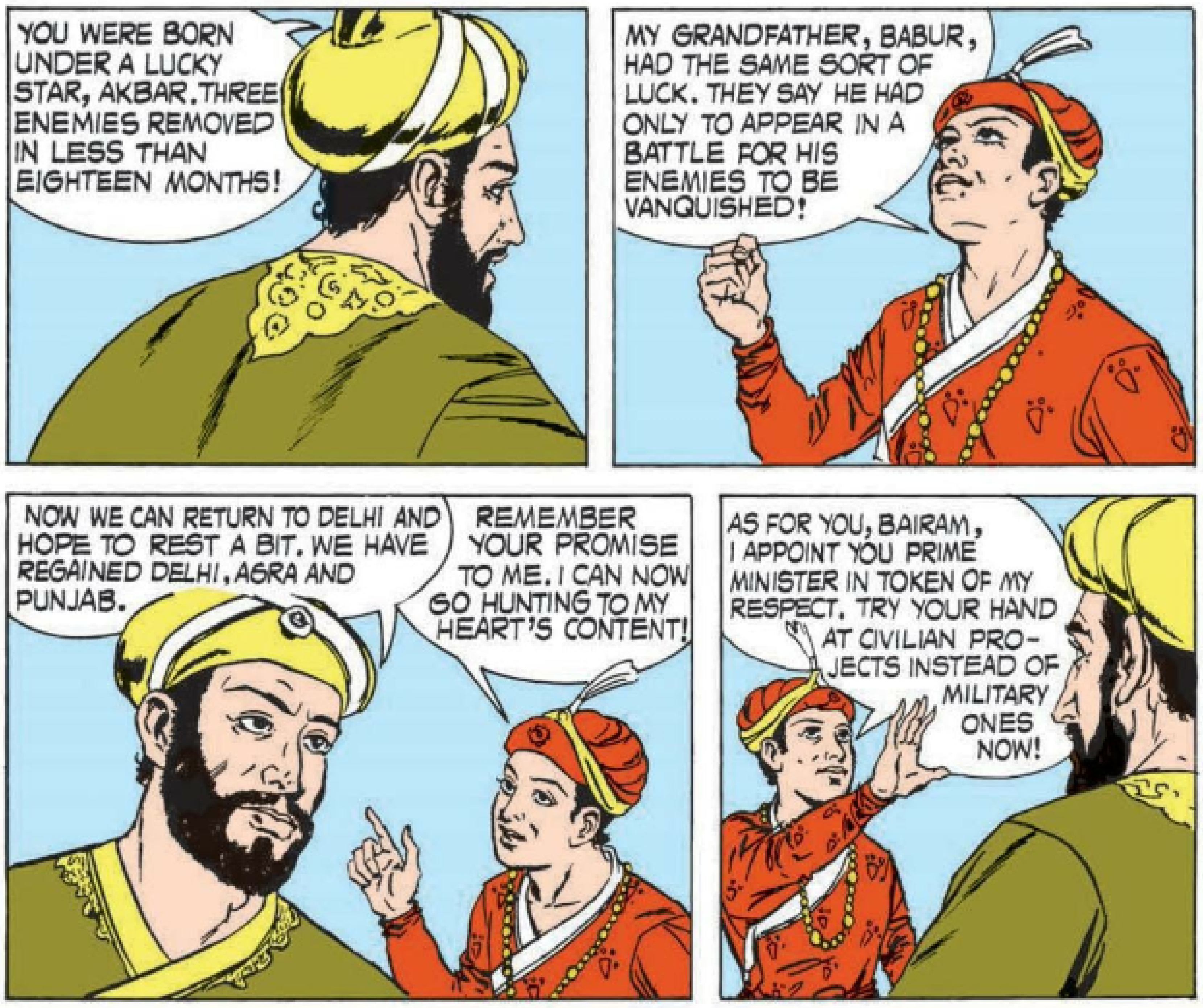

AKBAR RETURNED TO THE CAMPAIGN. THE MUGHAL ARMY NOW HAD THE UPPER HAND AND SIKANDAR HAD RETREATED INTO THE FORT AT MANKOT.


UNDER BAIRAM'S ABLE GUIDANCE, THE MUGHALS LAID SIEGE TO THE FORT AT MANKOT, BUT SIKANDAR HELD OUT FOR SIX LONG MONTHS.
SIKANDAR CANNOT HOPE TO WIN. WHY DOESN'T HE GIVE IN?
HE KNOWS WE ARE BEING TROUBLED BY THE AFGHANS LED BY ADIL SHAH.

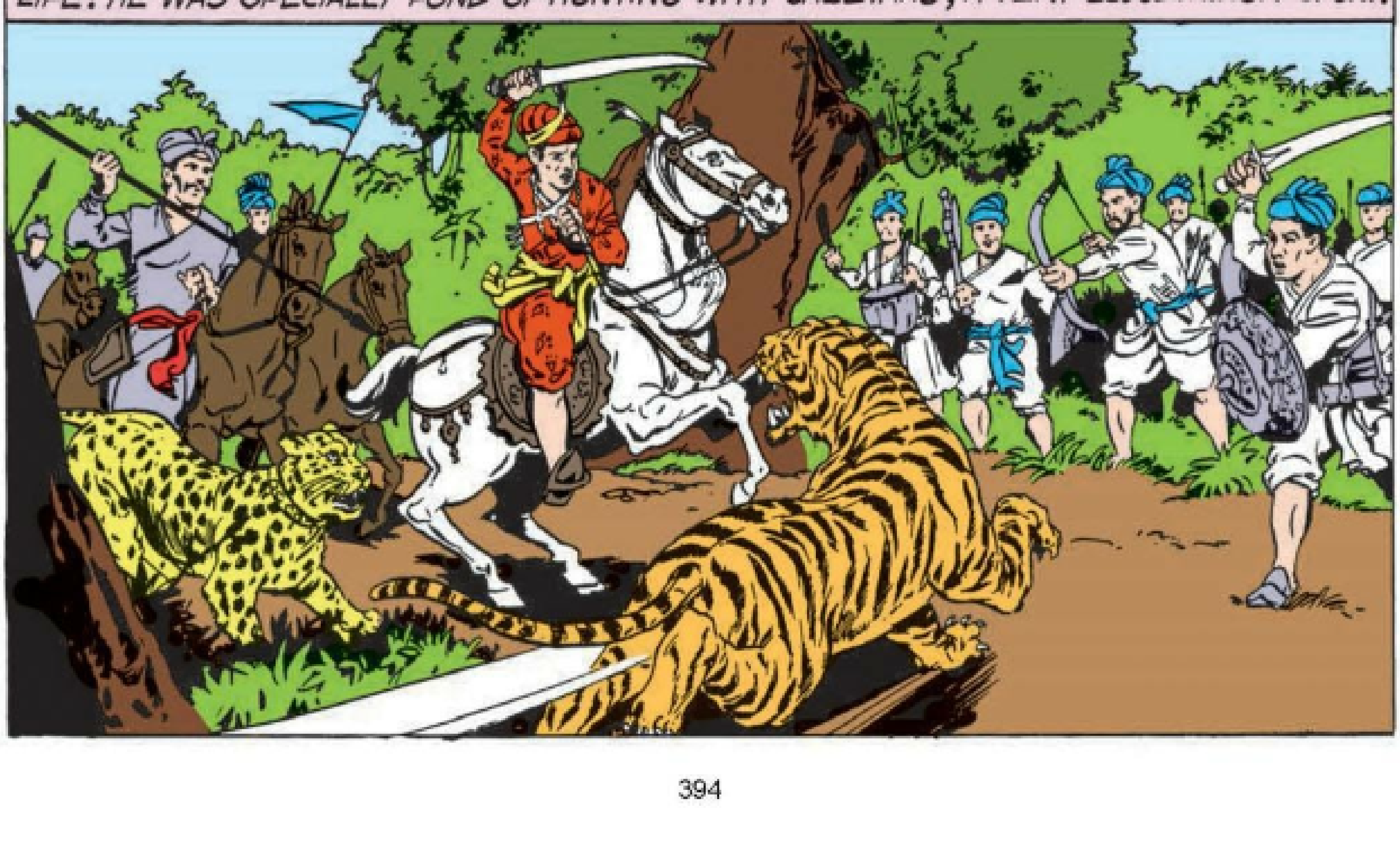

SO HE IS HOPING SOME OF OUR DIVISIONS WILL BE CALLED TO OTHER AREAS?
EXACTLY! YOU ARE LEARNING FAST, AKBAR!

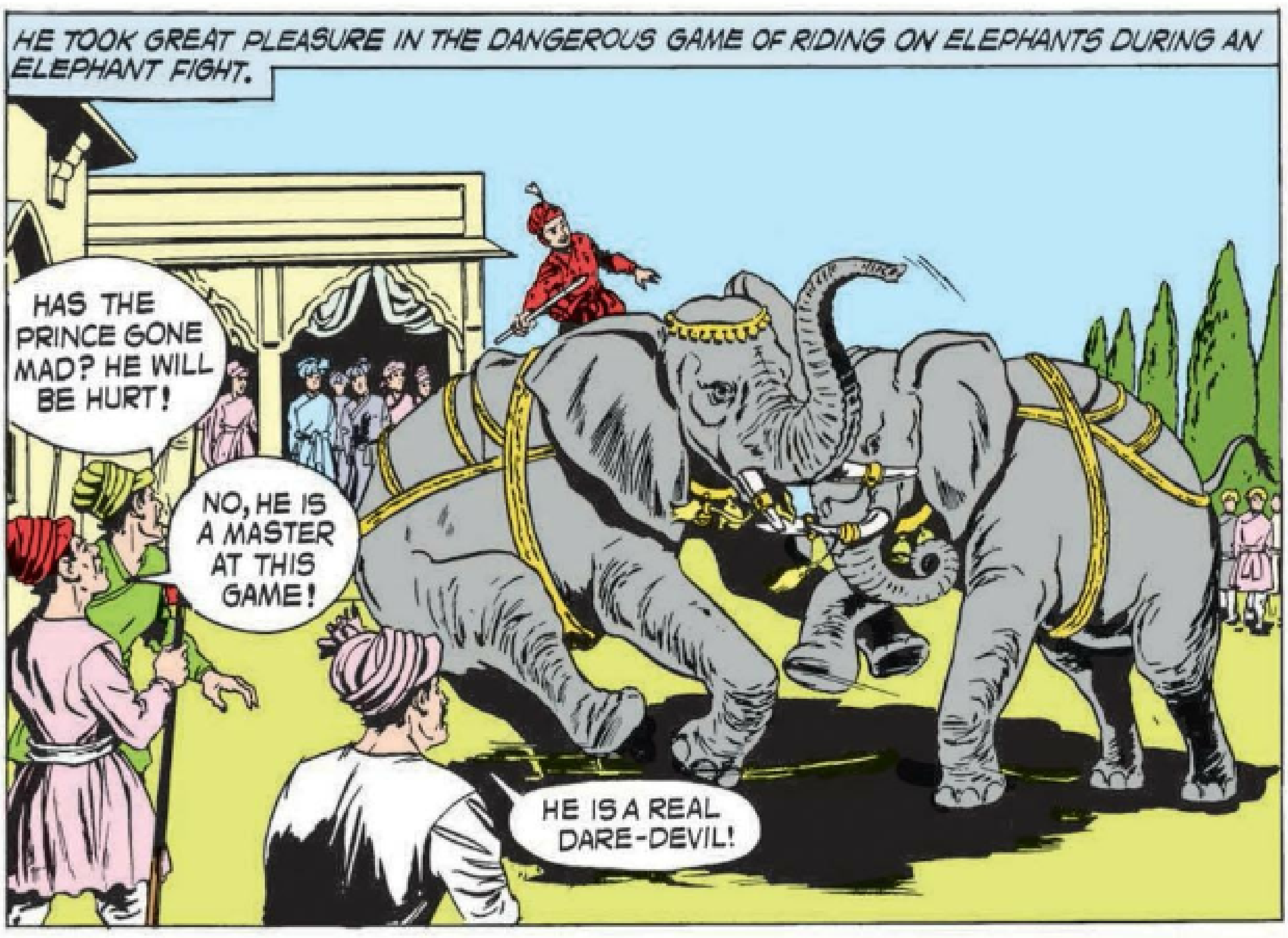

BUT SOON AFTER, THERE WAS GOOD NEWS FROM BENGAL—
ADIL SHAH HAS BEEN KILLED!
THAT WAS THE AFGHAN UPSTART WHO SAID HE HAD A CLAIM ON DELHI!

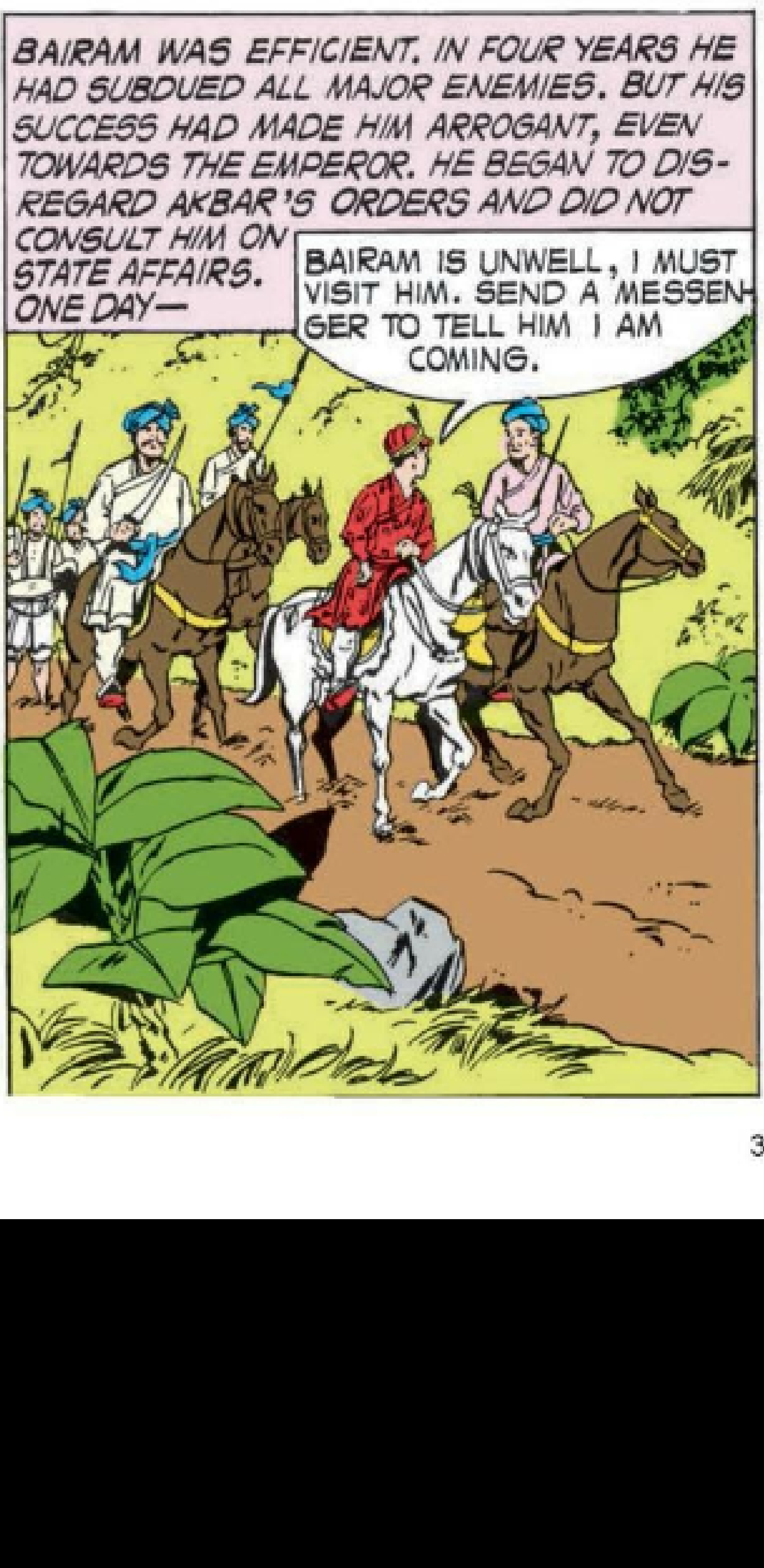

SOME TIME LATER—
SIKANDAR HAS AGREED TO A TRUCE. IN RETURN, WE WILL SPARE HIS LIFE AND GIVE HIM A GRANT OF LAND.
WE OWE THIS SUCCESS TO YOU, BAIRAM.

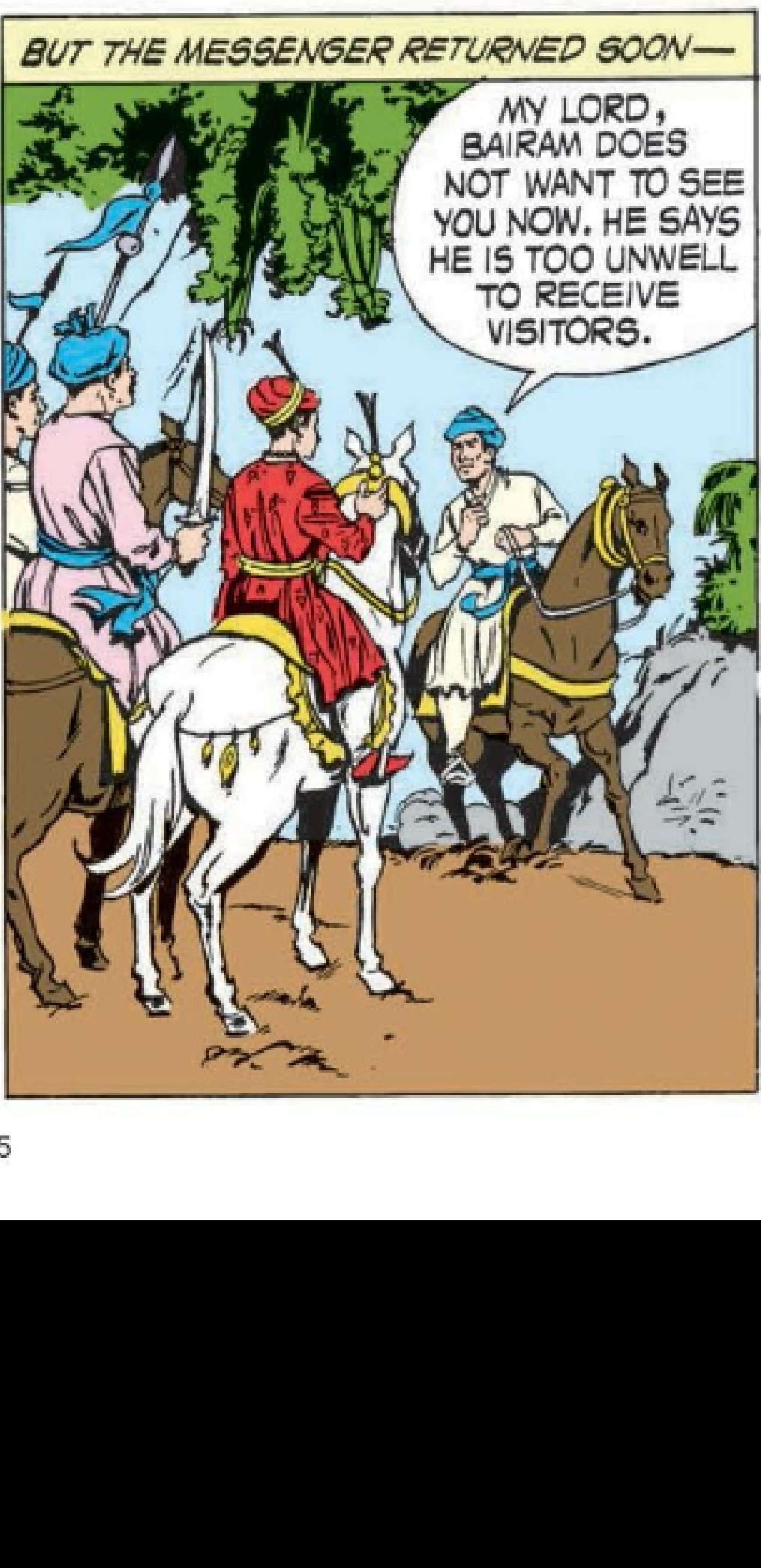

YOU WERE BORN UNDER A LUCKY STAR, AKBAR. THREE ENEMIES REMOVED IN LESS THAN EIGHTEEN MONTHS!
MY GRANDFATHER, BABUR, HAD THE SAME SORT OF LUCK. THEY SAY HE HAD ONLY TO APPEAR IN A BATTLE FOR HIS ENEMIES TO BE VANQUISHED!
NOW WE CAN RETURN TO DELHI AND HOPE TO REST A BIT. WE HAVE REGAINED DELHI, AGRA AND PUNJAB.
REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE TO ME. I CAN NOW GO HUNTING TO MY HEART'S CONTENT!
AS FOR YOU, BAIRAM, I APPOINT YOU PRIME MINISTER IN TOKEN OF MY RESPECT. TRY YOUR HAND AT CIVILIAN PROJECTS INSTEAD OF MILITARY ONES NOW!

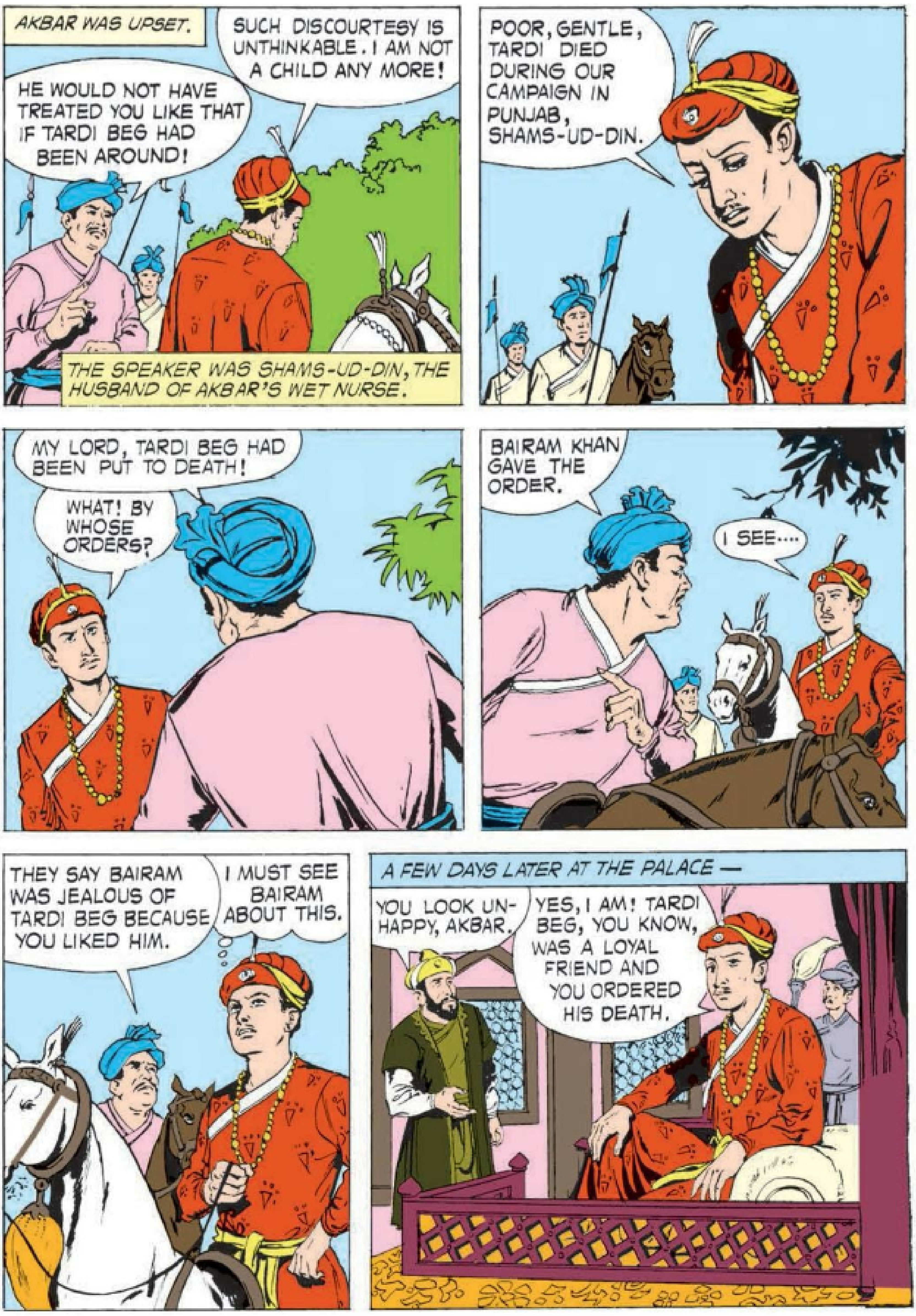
LEAVING THE HEAVY CARES OF STATE TO BAIRAM, AKBAR NOW LED A PLEASURE-FILLED LIFE. HE WAS SPECIALLY FOND OF HUNTING WITH CHEETAHS, A VERY BLOODTHIRSTY SPORT.

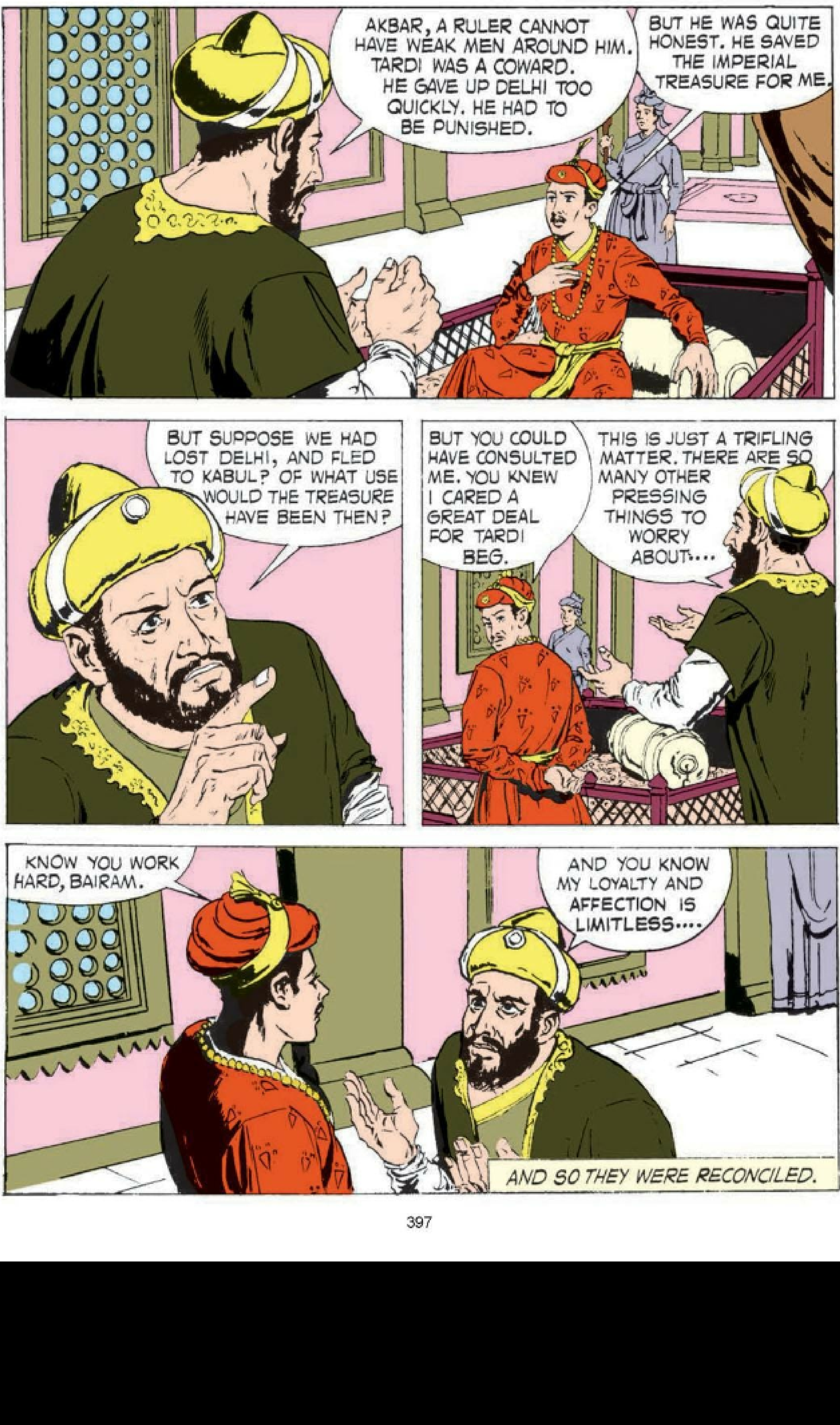


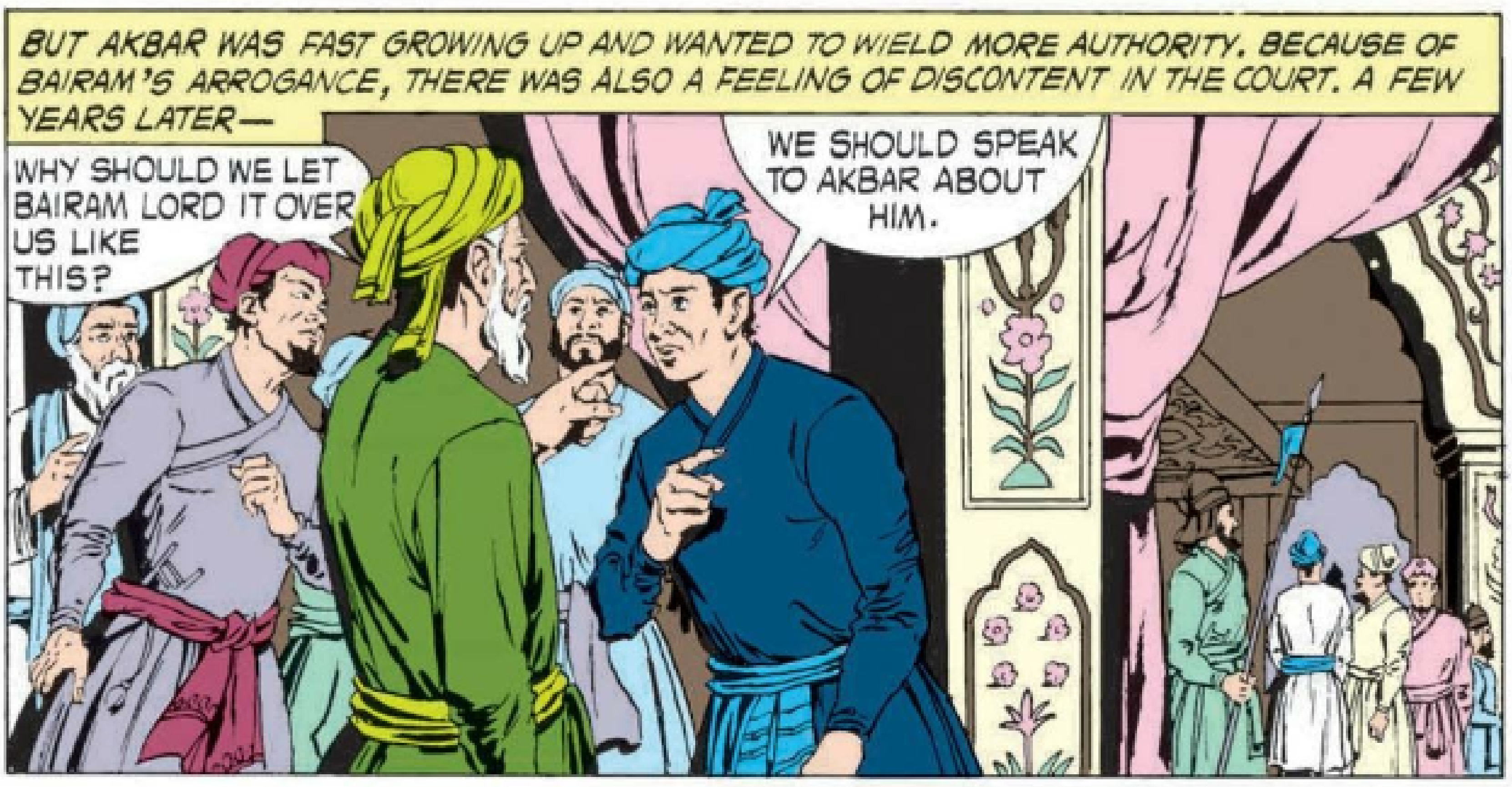

HE TOOK GREAT PLEASURE IN THE DANGEROUS GAME OF RIDING ON ELEPHANTS DURING AN ELEPHANT FIGHT.
HAS THE PRINCE GONE MAD? HE WILL BE HURT!
NO, HE IS A MASTER AT THIS GAME!
HE IS A REAL DARE-DEVIL!

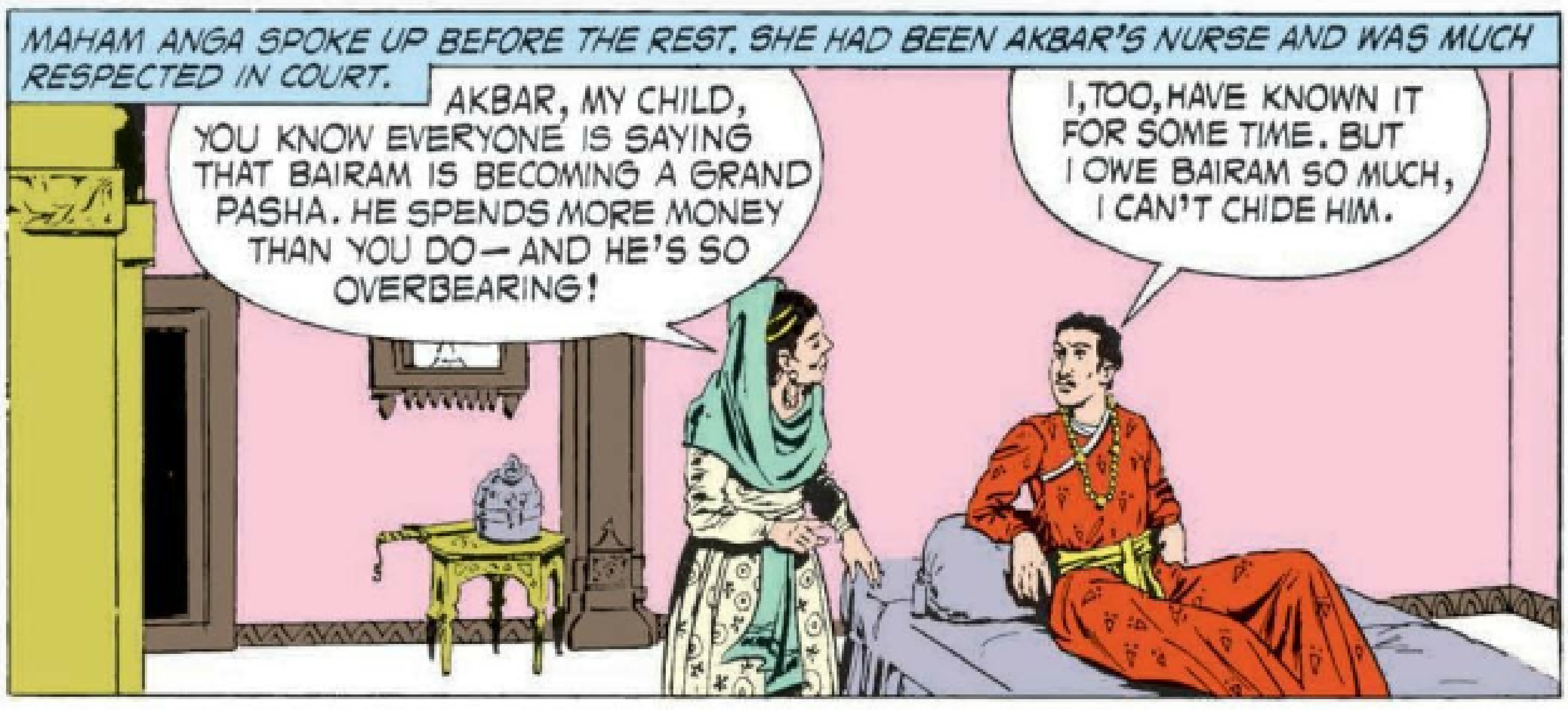

BAIRAM WAS EFFICIENT. IN FOUR YEARS HE HAD SUBDUED ALL MAJOR ENEMIES. BUT HIS SUCCESS HAD MADE HIM ARROGANT, EVEN TOWARDS THE EMPEROR. HE BEGAN TO DISREGARD AKBAR'S ORDERS AND DID NOT CONSULT HIM ON STATE AFFAIRS. ONE DAY—
BAIRAM IS UNWELL, I MUST VISIT HIM. SEND A MESSENGER TO TELL HIM I AM COMING.

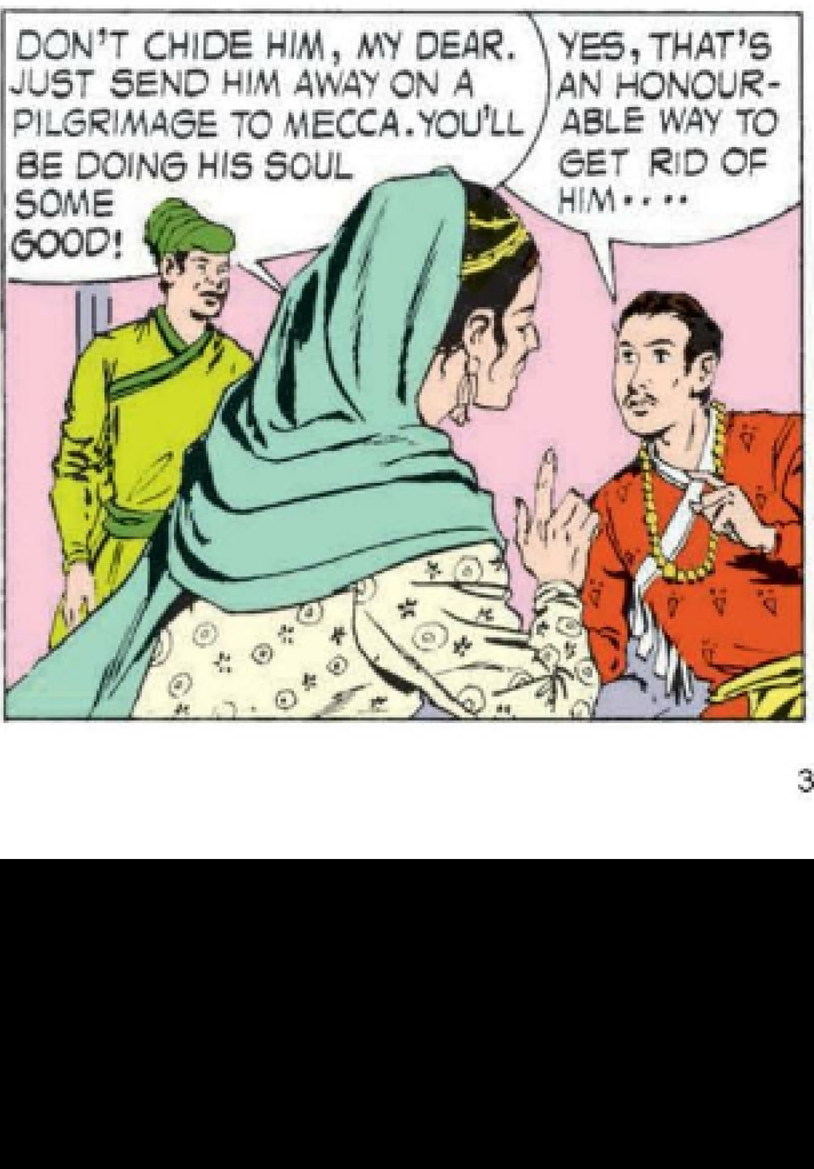

BUT THE MESSENGER RETURNED SOON—
MY LORD, BAIRAM DOES NOT WANT TO SEE YOU NOW. HE SAYS HE IS TOO UNWELL TO RECEIVE VISITORS.

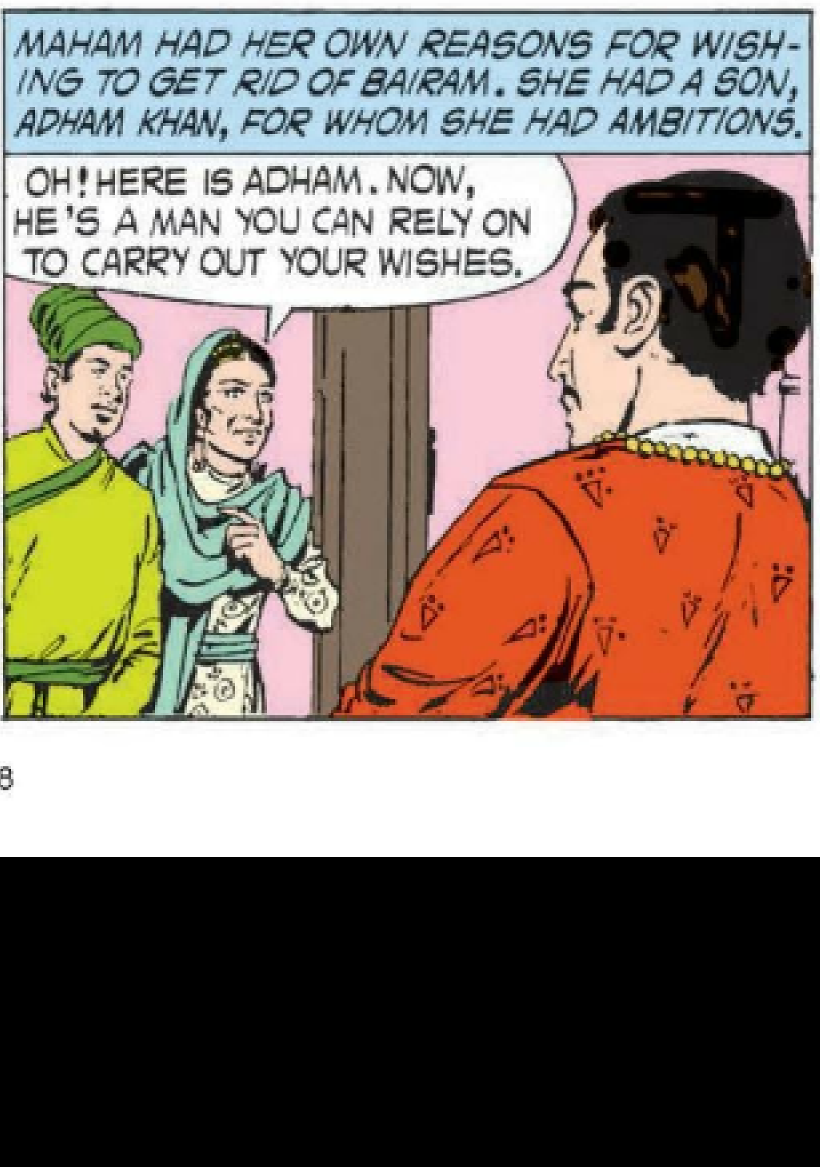

AKBAR WAS UPSET.
SUCH DISCOURTESY IS UNTHINKABLE. I AM NOT A CHILD ANY MORE!
HE WOULD NOT HAVE TREATED YOU LIKE THAT IF TARDI BEG HAD BEEN AROUND!
THE SPEAKER WAS SHAMS-UD-DIN, THE HUSBAND OF AKBAR'S WET NURSE.
POOR, GENTLE, TARDI DIED DURING OUR CAMPAIGN IN PUNJAB, SHAMS-UD-DIN.
MY LORD, TARDI BEG HAD BEEN PUT TO DEATH!
WHAT! BY WHOSE ORDERS?
BAIRAM KHAN GAVE THE ORDER.
I SEE....
THEY SAY BAIRAM WAS JEALOUS OF TARDI BEG BECAUSE YOU LIKED HIM.
I MUST SEE BAIRAM ABOUT THIS.
A FEW DAYS LATER AT THE PALACE —
YOU LOOK UNHAPPY, AKBAR.
YES, I AM! TARDI BEG, YOU KNOW, WAS A LOYAL FRIEND AND YOU ORDERED HIS DEATH.

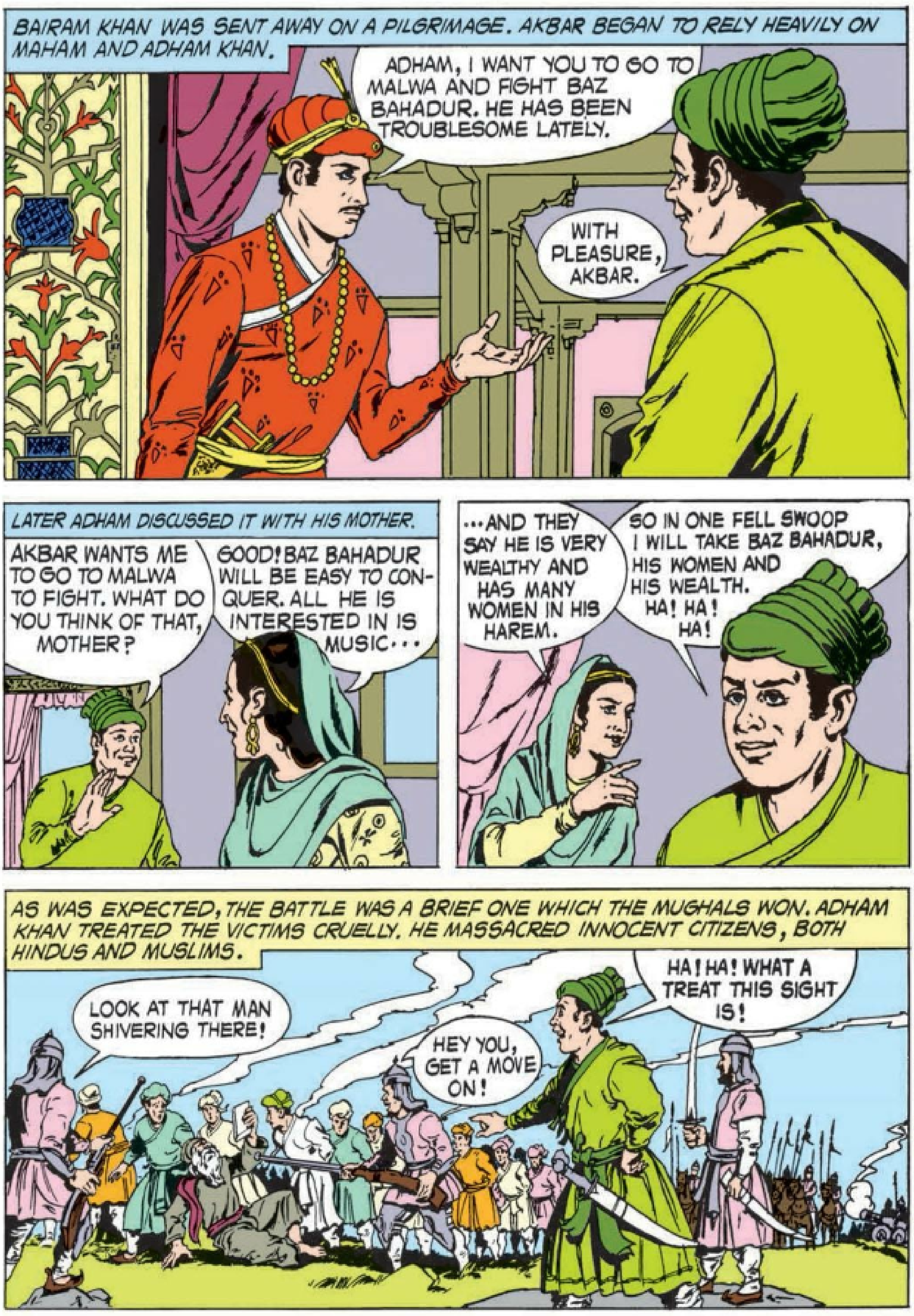

AKBAR, A RULER CANNOT HAVE WEAK MEN AROUND HIM. TARDI WAS A COWARD. HE GAVE UP DELHI TOO QUICKLY. HE HAD TO BE PUNISHED.
BUT HE WAS QUITE HONEST. HE SAVED THE IMPERIAL TREASURE FOR ME.
BUT SUPPOSE WE HAD LOST DELHI, AND FLED TO KABUL? OF WHAT USE WOULD THE TREASURE HAVE BEEN THEN?
BUT YOU COULD HAVE CONSULTED ME. YOU KNEW I CARED A GREAT DEAL FOR TARDI BEG.
THIS IS JUST A TRIFLING MATTER. THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER PRESSING THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT....
KNOW YOU WORK HARD, BAIRAM.
AND YOU KNOW MY LOYALTY AND AFFECTION IS LIMITLESS....
AND SO THEY WERE RECONCILED.

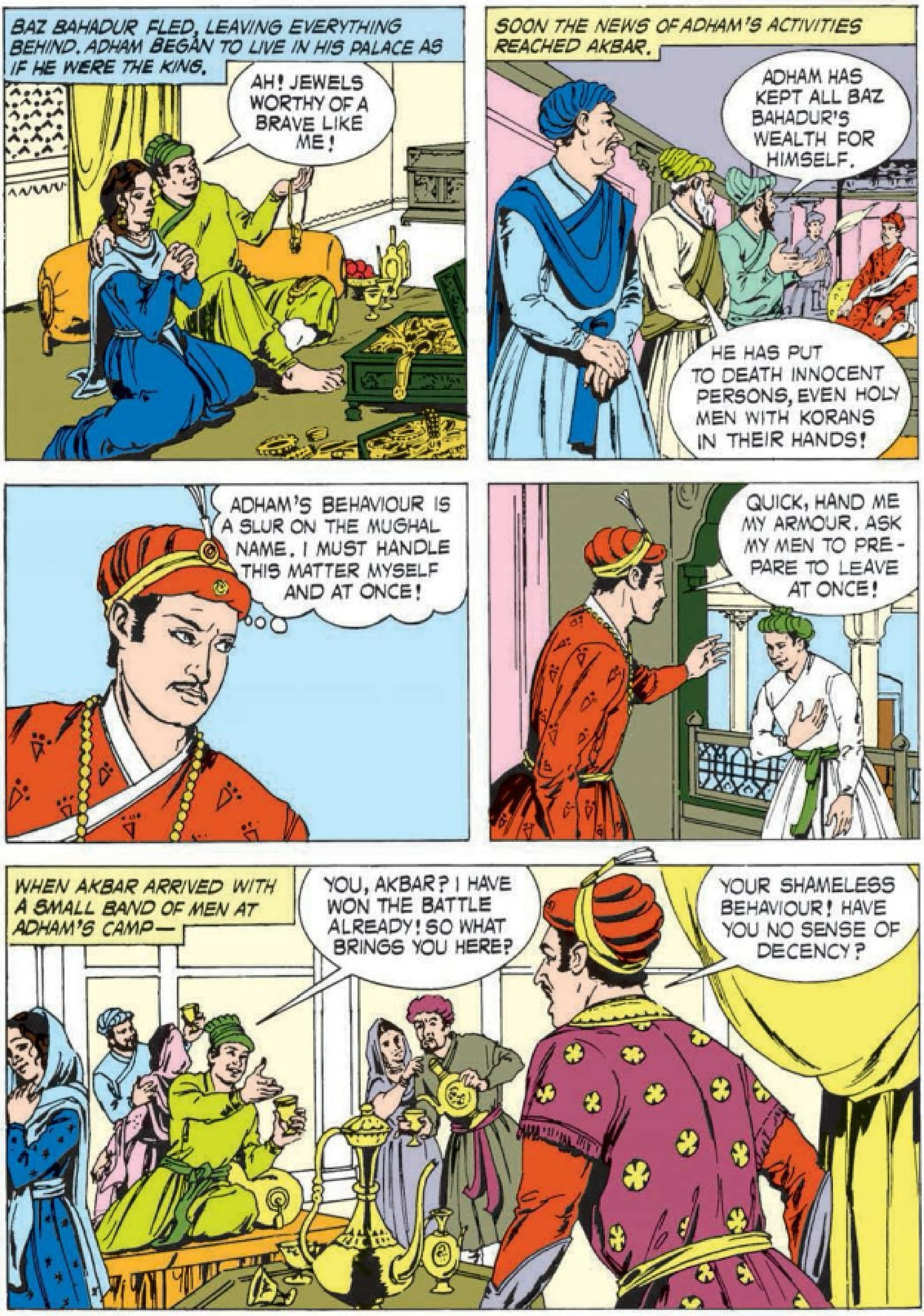

BUT AKBAR WAS FAST GROWING UP AND WANTED TO WIELD MORE AUTHORITY. BECAUSE OF BAIRAM'S ARROGANCE, THERE WAS ALSO A FEELING OF DISCONTENT IN THE COURT. A FEW YEARS LATER—
WHY SHOULD WE LET BAIRAM LORD IT OVER US LIKE THIS?
WE SHOULD SPEAK TO AKBAR ABOUT HIM.

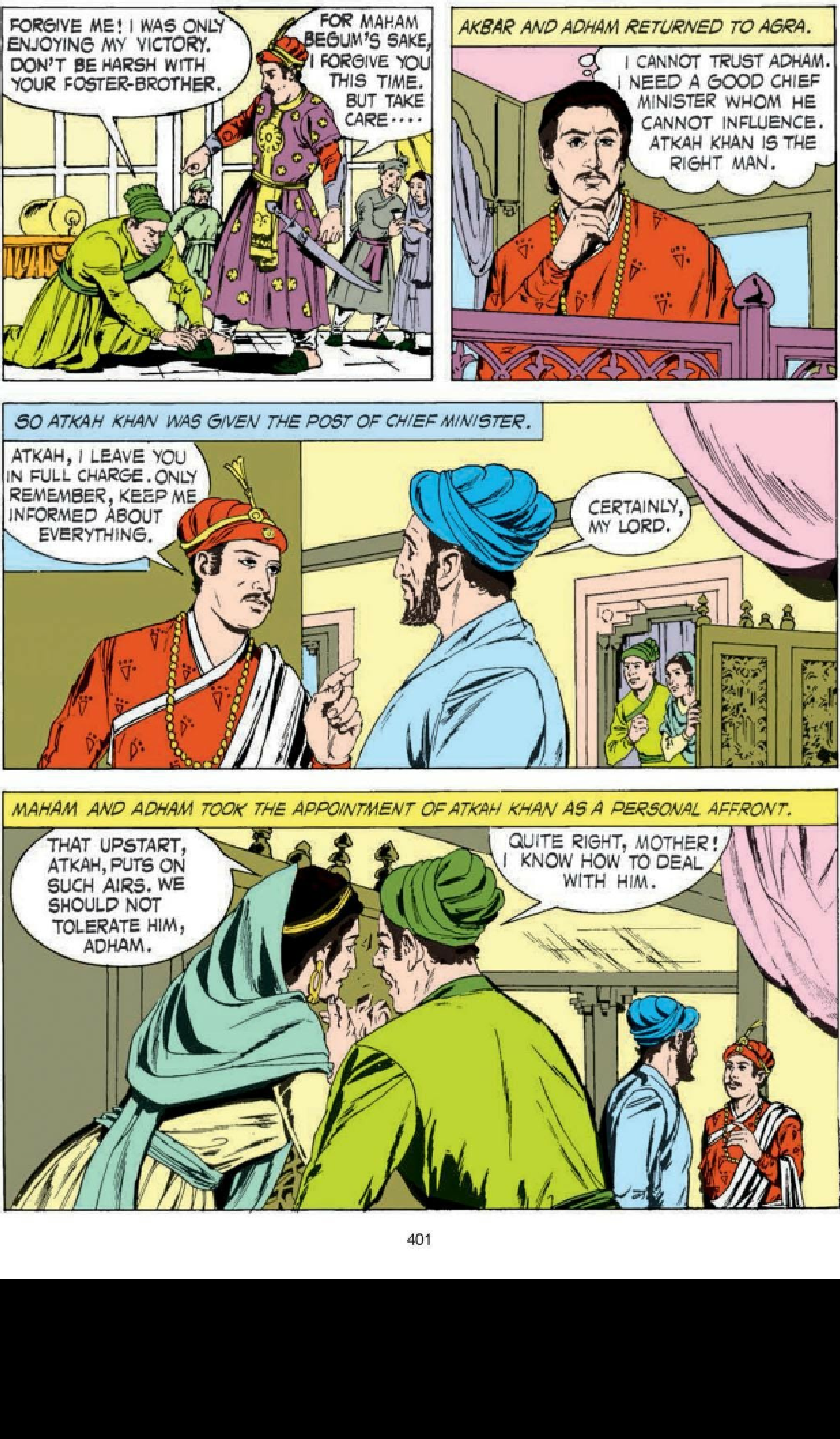

MAHAM ANGA SPOKE UP BEFORE THE REST. SHE HAD BEEN AKBAR'S NURSE AND WAS MUCH RESPECTED IN COURT.
AKBAR, MY CHILD, YOU KNOW EVERYONE IS SAYING THAT BAIRAM IS BECOMING A GRAND PASHA. HE SPENDS MORE MONEY THAN YOU DO— AND HE'S SO OVERBEARING!
I, TOO, HAVE KNOWN IT FOR SOME TIME. BUT I OWE BAIRAM SO MUCH, I CAN'T CHIDE HIM.


DON'T CHIDE HIM, MY DEAR. JUST SEND HIM AWAY ON A PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA. YOU'LL BE DOING HIS SOUL SOME GOOD!
YES, THAT'S AN HONOURABLE WAY TO GET RID OF HIM...

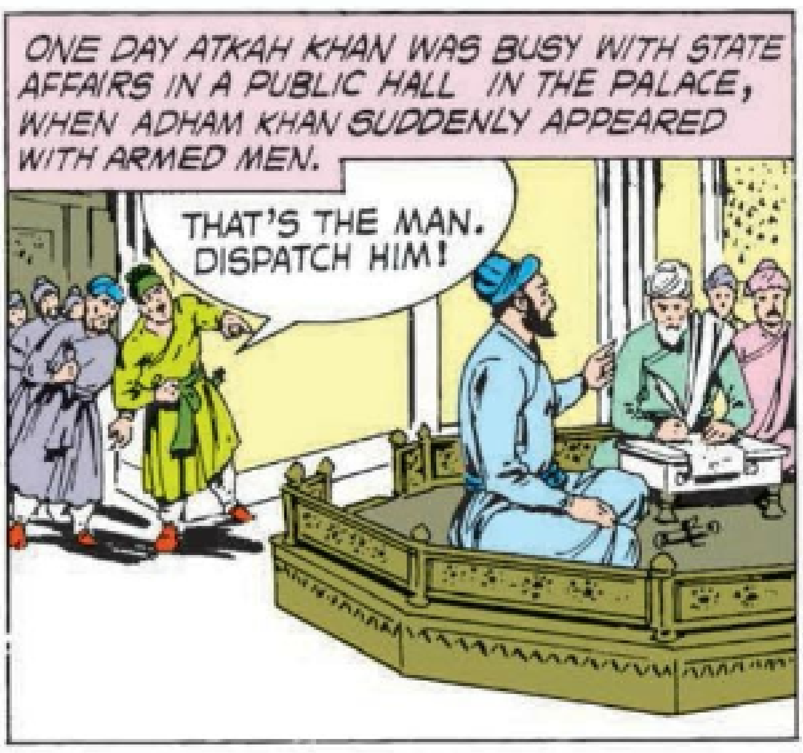

MAHAM HAD HER OWN REASONS FOR WISHING TO GET RID OF BAIRAM. SHE HAD A SON, ADHAM KHAN, FOR WHOM SHE HAD AMBITIONS.
OH! HERE IS ADHAM. NOW, HE'S A MAN YOU CAN RELY ON TO CARRY OUT YOUR WISHES.

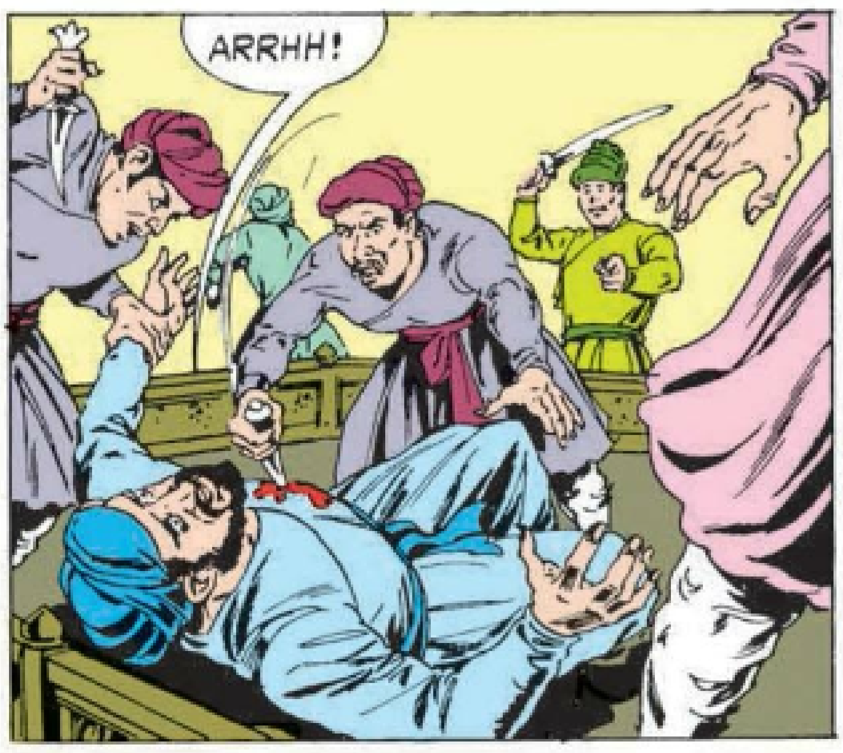

BAIRAM KHAN WAS SENT AWAY ON A PILGRIMAGE. AKBAR BEGAN TO RELY HEAVILY ON MAHAM AND ADHAM KHAN.
ADHAM, I WANT YOU TO GO TO MALWA AND FIGHT BAZ BAHADUR. HE HAS BEEN TROUBLESOME LATELY.
WITH PLEASURE, AKBAR.
LATER ADHAM DISCUSSED IT WITH HIS MOTHER.
AKBAR WANTS ME TO GO TO MALWA TO FIGHT. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT, MOTHER?
GOOD! BAZ BAHADUR WILL BE EASY TO CONQUER. ALL HE IS INTERESTED IN IS MUSIC...
...AND THEY SAY HE IS VERY WEALTHY AND HAS MANY WOMEN IN HIS HAREM.
SO IN ONE FELL SWOOP I WILL TAKE BAZ BAHADUR, HIS WOMEN AND HIS WEALTH. HA! HA! HA!
AS WAS EXPECTED, THE BATTLE WAS A BRIEF ONE WHICH THE MUGHALS WON. ADHAM KHAN TREATED THE VICTIMS CRUELLY. HE MASSACRED INNOCENT CITIZENS, BOTH HINDUS AND MUSLIMS.
LOOK AT THAT MAN SHIVERING THERE!
HEY YOU, GET A MOVE ON!
HA! HA! WHAT A TREAT THIS SIGHT IS!


BAZ BAHADUR FLED, LEAVING EVERYTHING BEHIND. ADHAM BEGAN TO LIVE IN HIS PALACE AS IF HE WERE THE KING.
AH! JEWELS WORTHY OF A BRAVE LIKE ME!
SOON THE NEWS OF ADHAM'S ACTIVITIES REACHED AKBAR.
ADHAM HAS KEPT ALL BAZ BAHADUR'S WEALTH FOR HIMSELF.
HE HAS PUT TO DEATH INNOCENT PERSONS, EVEN HOLY MEN WITH KORANS IN THEIR HANDS!
ADHAM'S BEHAVIOUR IS A SLUR ON THE MUGHAL NAME. I MUST HANDLE THIS MATTER MYSELF AND AT ONCE!
QUICK, HAND ME MY ARMOUR. ASK MY MEN TO PREPARE TO LEAVE AT ONCE!
WHEN AKBAR ARRIVED WITH A SMALL BAND OF MEN AT ADHAM'S CAMP—
YOU, AKBAR? I HAVE WON THE BATTLE ALREADY! SO WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
YOUR SHAMELESS BEHAVIOUR! HAVE YOU NO SENSE OF DECENCY?

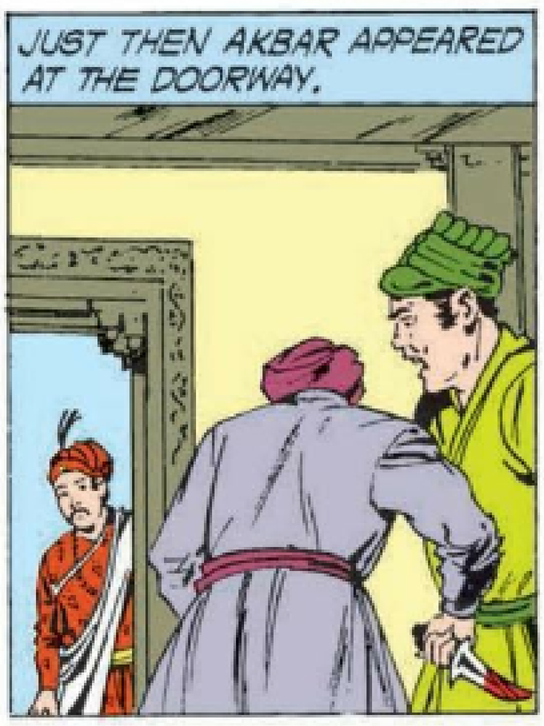

FORGIVE ME! I WAS ONLY ENJOYING MY VICTORY. DON'T BE HARSH WITH YOUR FOSTER-BROTHER.
FOR MAHAM BEGUM'S SAKE, I FORGIVE YOU THIS TIME. BUT TAKE CARE....
AKBAR AND ADHAM RETURNED TO AGRA.
I CANNOT TRUST ADHAM. I NEED A GOOD CHIEF MINISTER WHOM HE CANNOT INFLUENCE. ATKAH KHAN IS THE RIGHT MAN.
SO ATKAH KHAN WAS GIVEN THE POST OF CHIEF MINISTER.
ATKAH, I LEAVE YOU IN FULL CHARGE. ONLY REMEMBER, KEEP ME INFORMED ABOUT EVERYTHING.
CERTAINLY, MY LORD.
MAHAM AND ADHAM TOOK THE APPOINTMENT OF ATKAH KHAN AS A PERSONAL AFFRONT.
THAT UPSTART, ATKAH, PUTS ON SUCH AIRS. WE SHOULD NOT TOLERATE HIM, ADHAM.
QUITE RIGHT, MOTHER! I KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH HIM.

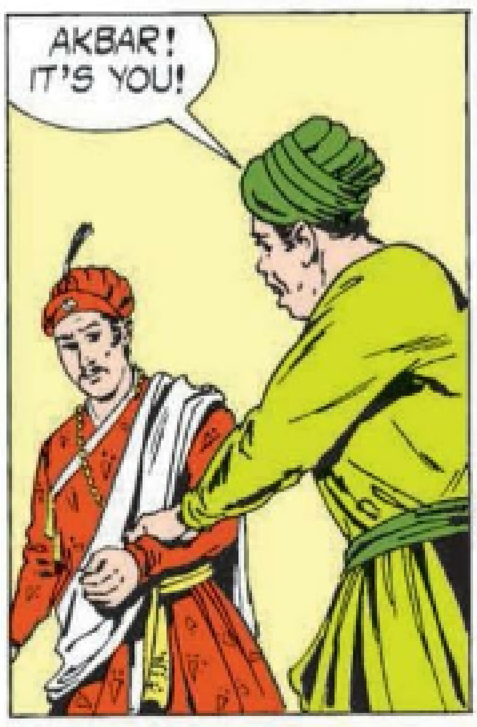
ONE DAY ATKAH KHAN WAS BUSY WITH STATE AFFAIRS IN A PUBLIC HALL IN THE PALACE, WHEN ADHAM KHAN SUDDENLY APPEARED WITH ARMED MEN.

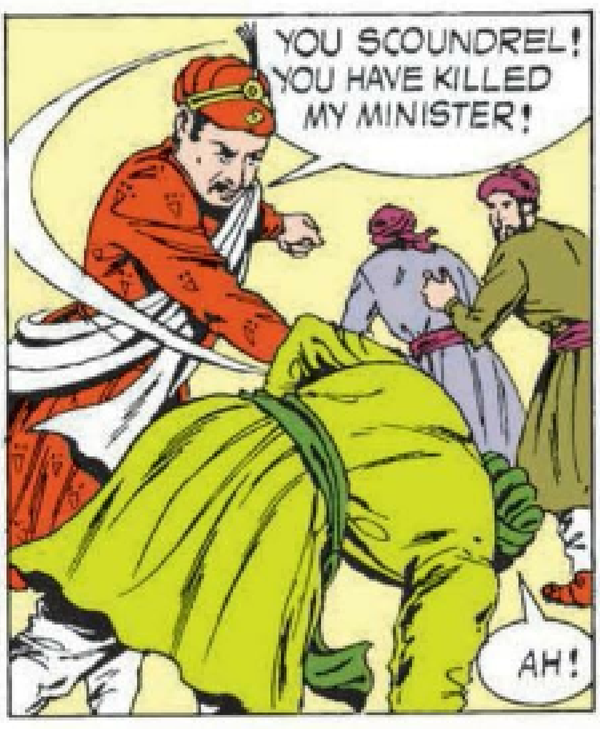

THAT'S THE MAN. DISPATCH HIM!

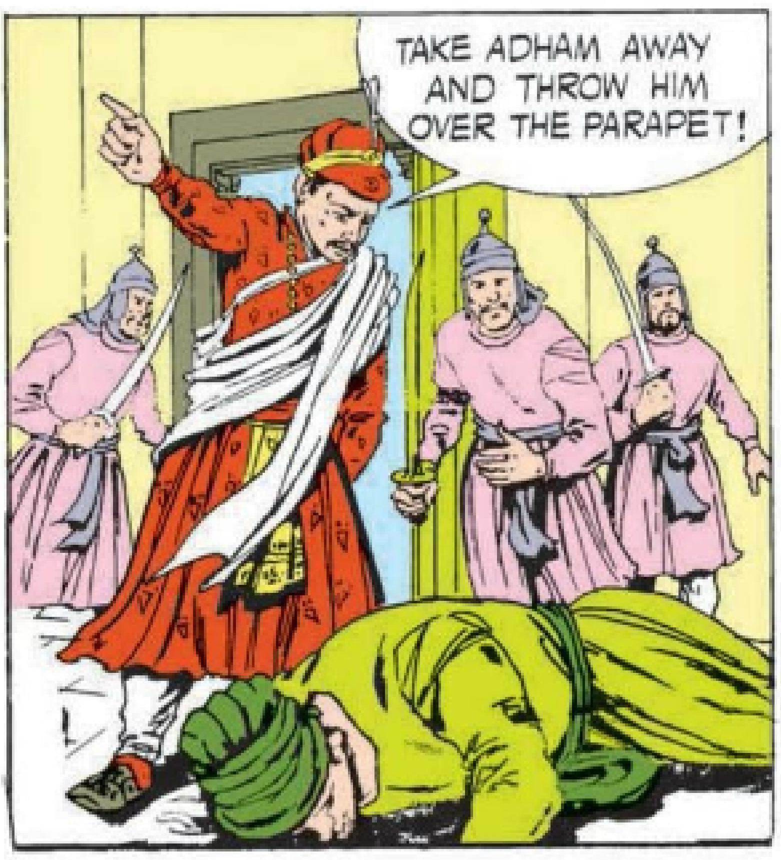


JUST THEN AKBAR APPEARED AT THE DOORWAY.

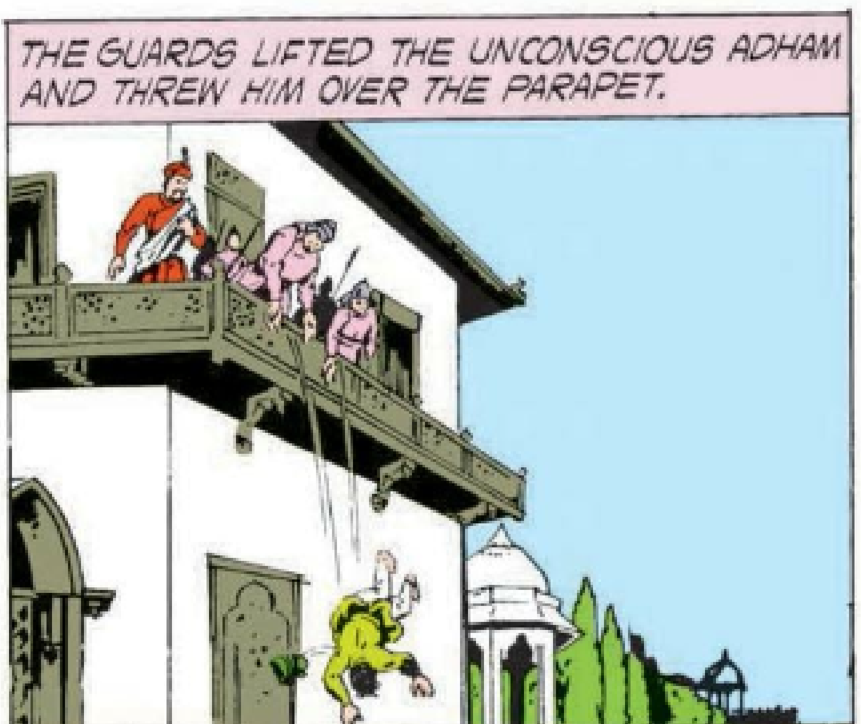



AKBAR! IT'S YOU!

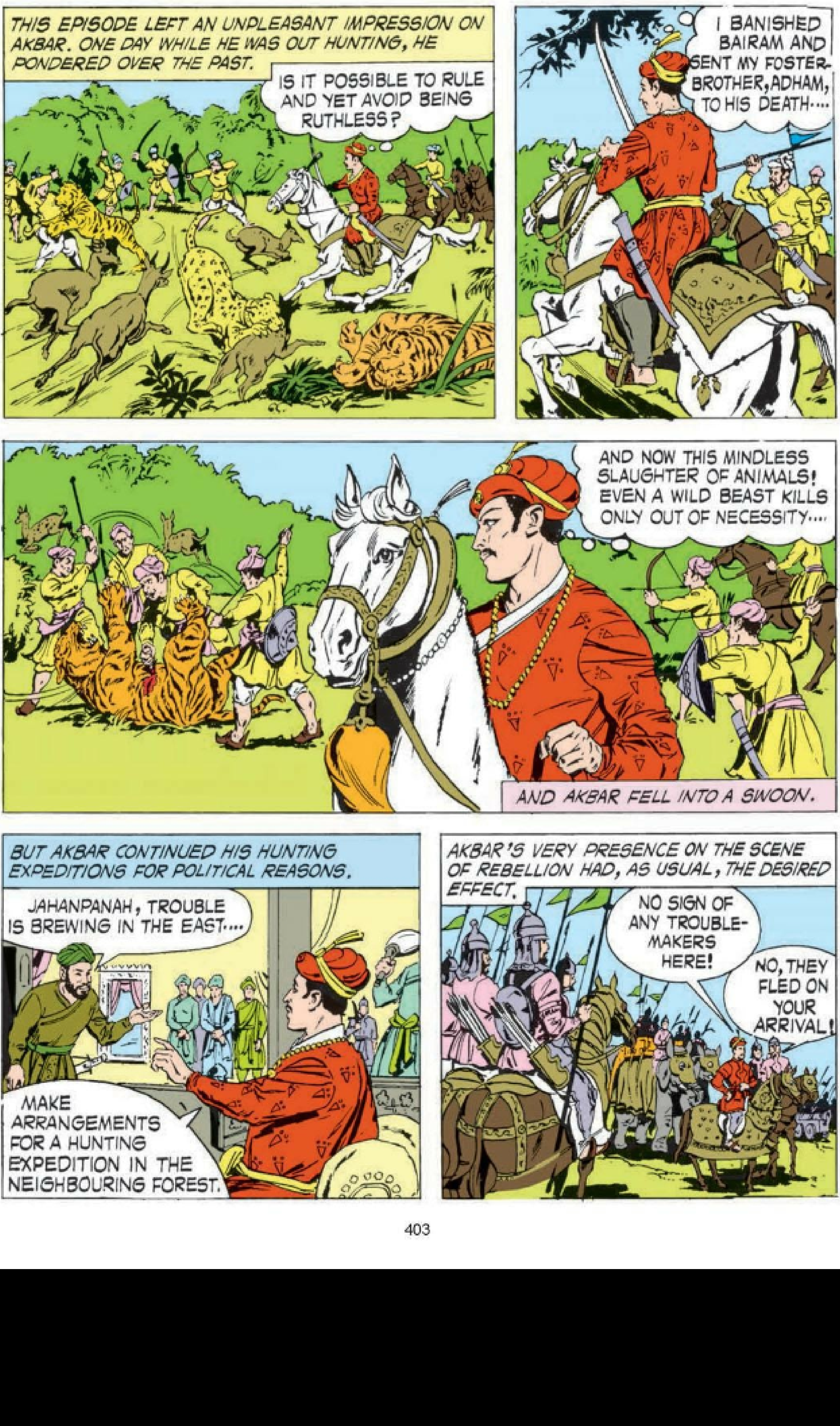

YOU SCOUNDREL! YOU HAVE KILLED MY MINISTER!
AH!

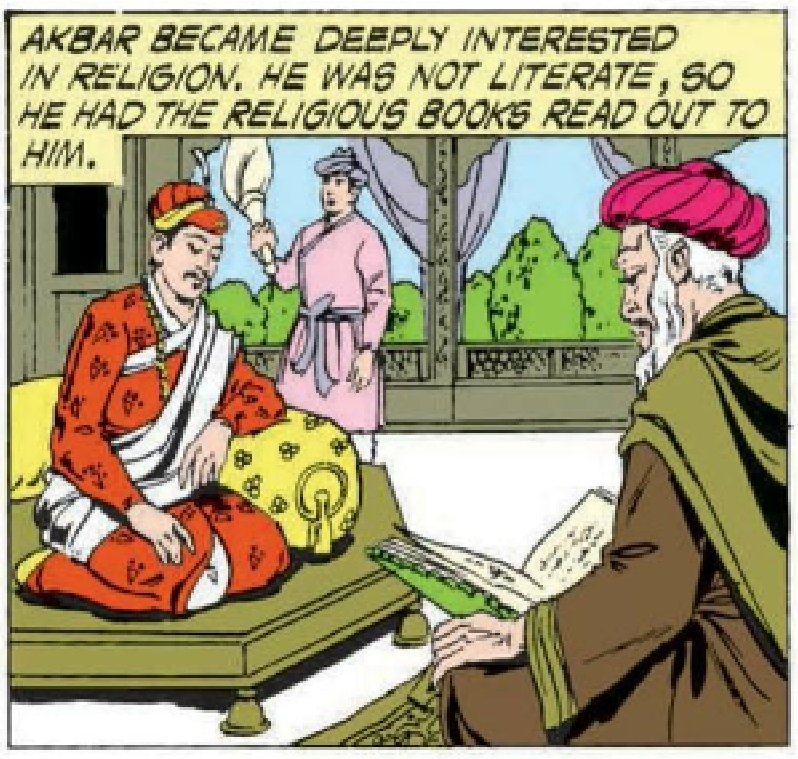

TAKE ADHAM AWAY AND THROW HIM OVER THE PARAPET!

THE GUARDS LIFTED THE UNCONSCIOUS ADHAM AND THREW HIM OVER THE PARAPET.

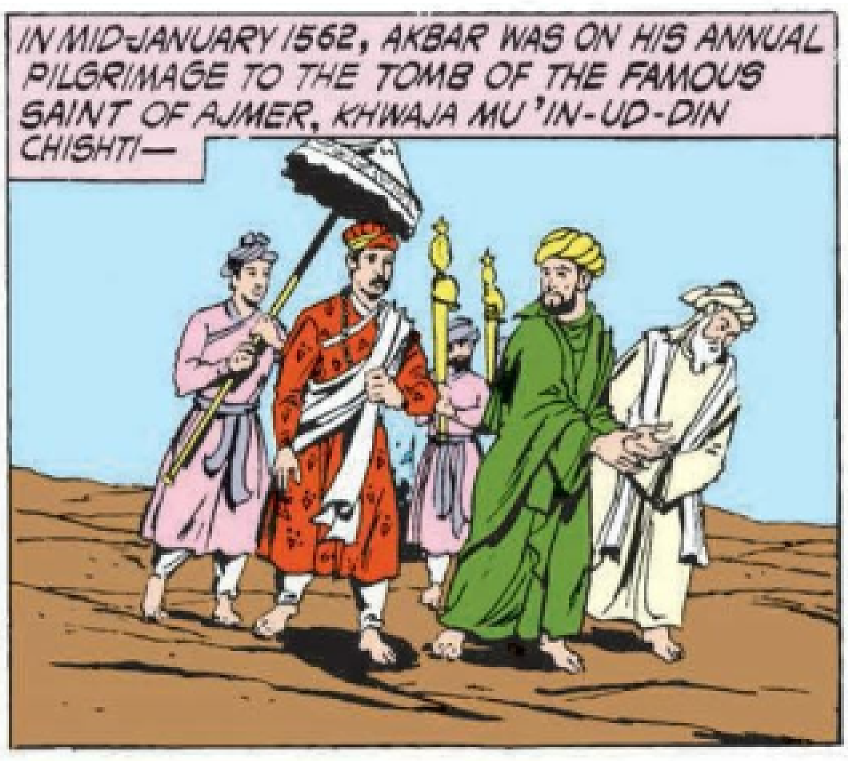


ADHAM DID NOT DIE THE FIRST TIME, HE HAD TO BE DRAGGED UP AND THROWN DOWN A SECOND TIME.

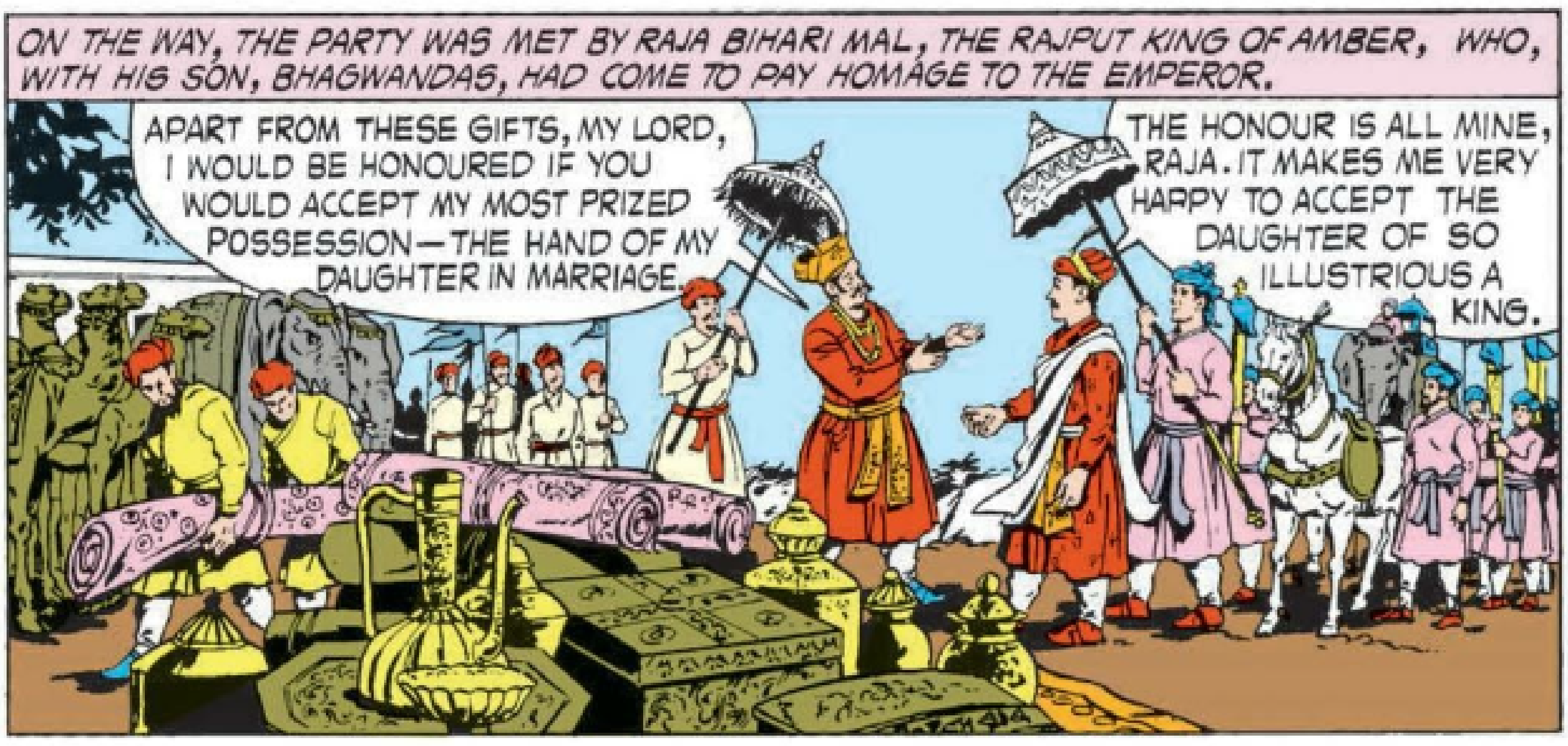

THIS EPISODE LEFT AN UNPLEASANT IMPRESSION ON AKBAR. ONE DAY WHILE HE WAS OUT HUNTING, HE PONDERED OVER THE PAST.
IS IT POSSIBLE TO RULE AND YET AVOID BEING RUTHLESS?
I BANISHED BAIRAM AND SENT MY FOSTER-BROTHER, ADHAM, TO HIS DEATH....
AND NOW THIS MINDLESS SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS! EVEN A WILD BEAST KILLS ONLY OUT OF NECESSITY....
AND AKBAR FELL INTO A SWOON.
BUT AKBAR CONTINUED HIS HUNTING EXPEDITIONS FOR POLITICAL REASONS.
JAHANPANAH, TROUBLE IS BREWING IN THE EAST....
MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A HUNTING EXPEDITION IN THE NEIGHBOURING FOREST.
AKBAR'S VERY PRESENCE ON THE SCENE OF REBELLION HAD, AS USUAL, THE DESIRED EFFECT.
NO SIGN OF ANY TROUBLE-MAKERS HERE!
NO, THEY FLED ON YOUR ARRIVAL!



AKBAR BECAME DEEPLY INTERESTED IN RELIGION. HE WAS NOT LITERATE, SO HE HAD THE RELIGIOUS BOOKS READ OUT TO HIM.

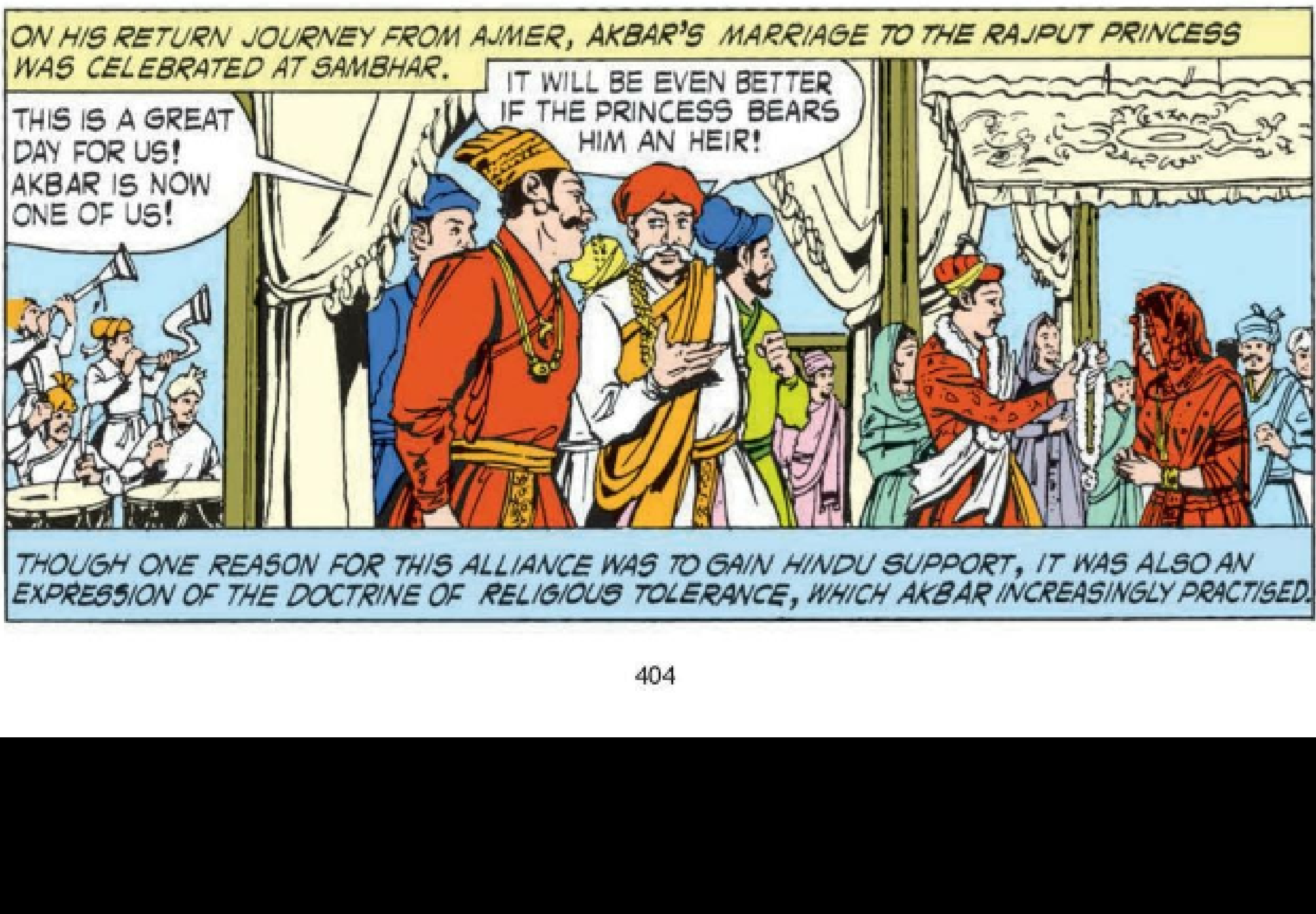


IN MID-JANUARY 1562, AKBAR WAS ON HIS ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO THE TOMB OF THE FAMOUS SAINT OF AJMER, KHWAJA MU'IN-UD-DIN CHISHTI—



ON THE WAY, THE PARTY WAS MET BY RAJA BIHARI MAL, THE RAJPUT KING OF AMBER, WHO, WITH HIS SON, BHAGWANDAS, HAD COME TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE EMPEROR.

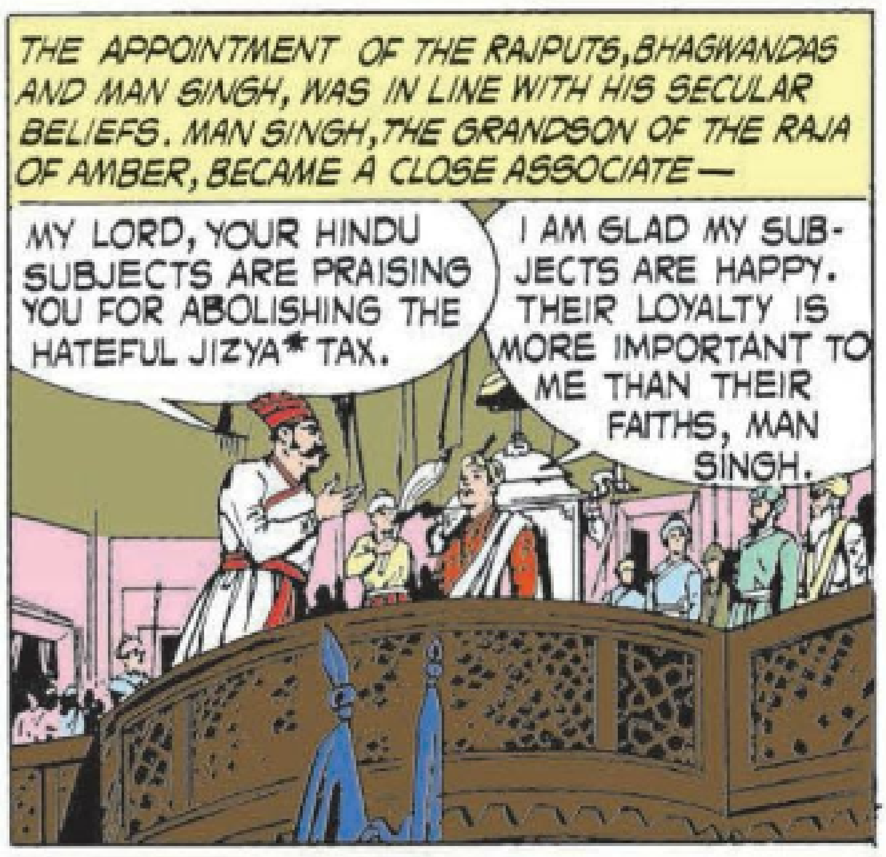
APART FROM THESE GIFTS, MY LORD, I WOULD BE HONOURED IF YOU WOULD ACCEPT MY MOST PRIZED POSSESSION—THE HAND OF MY DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE.
THE HONOUR IS ALL MINE, RAJA. IT MAKES ME VERY HAPPY TO ACCEPT THE DAUGHTER OF SO ILLUSTRIOUS A KING.



ON HIS RETURN JOURNEY FROM AJMER, AKBAR'S MARRIAGE TO THE RAJPUT PRINCESS WAS CELEBRATED AT SAMBHAR.

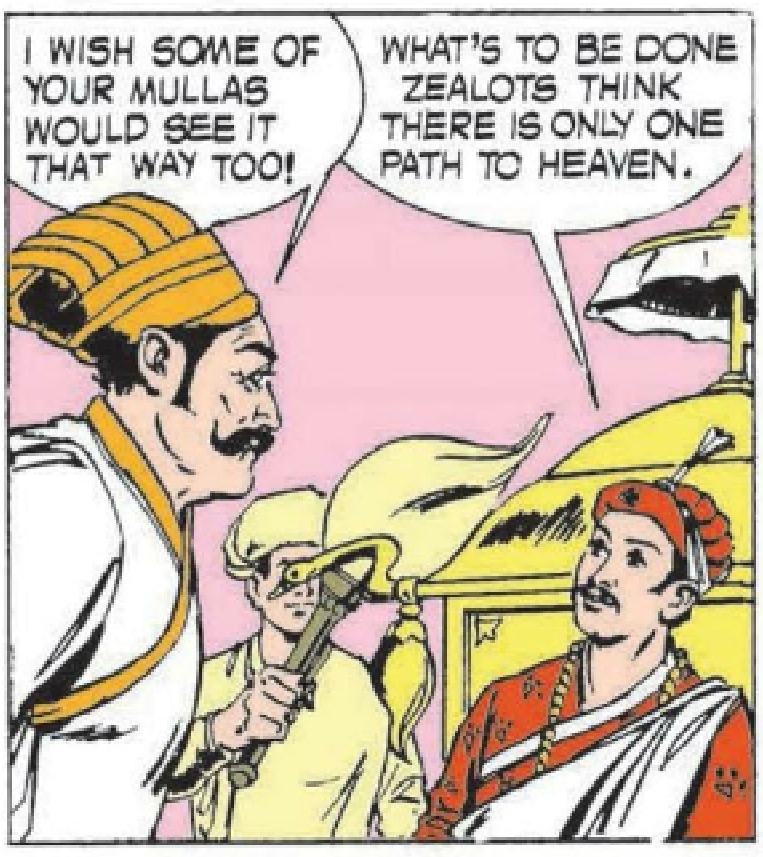
THIS IS A GREAT DAY FOR US! AKBAR IS NOW ONE OF US!
IT WILL BE EVEN BETTER IF THE PRINCESS BEARS HIM AN HEIR!

THOUGH ONE REASON FOR THIS ALLIANCE WAS TO GAIN HINDU SUPPORT, IT WAS ALSO AN EXPRESSION OF THE DOCTRINE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, WHICH AKBAR INCREASINGLY PRACTISED.

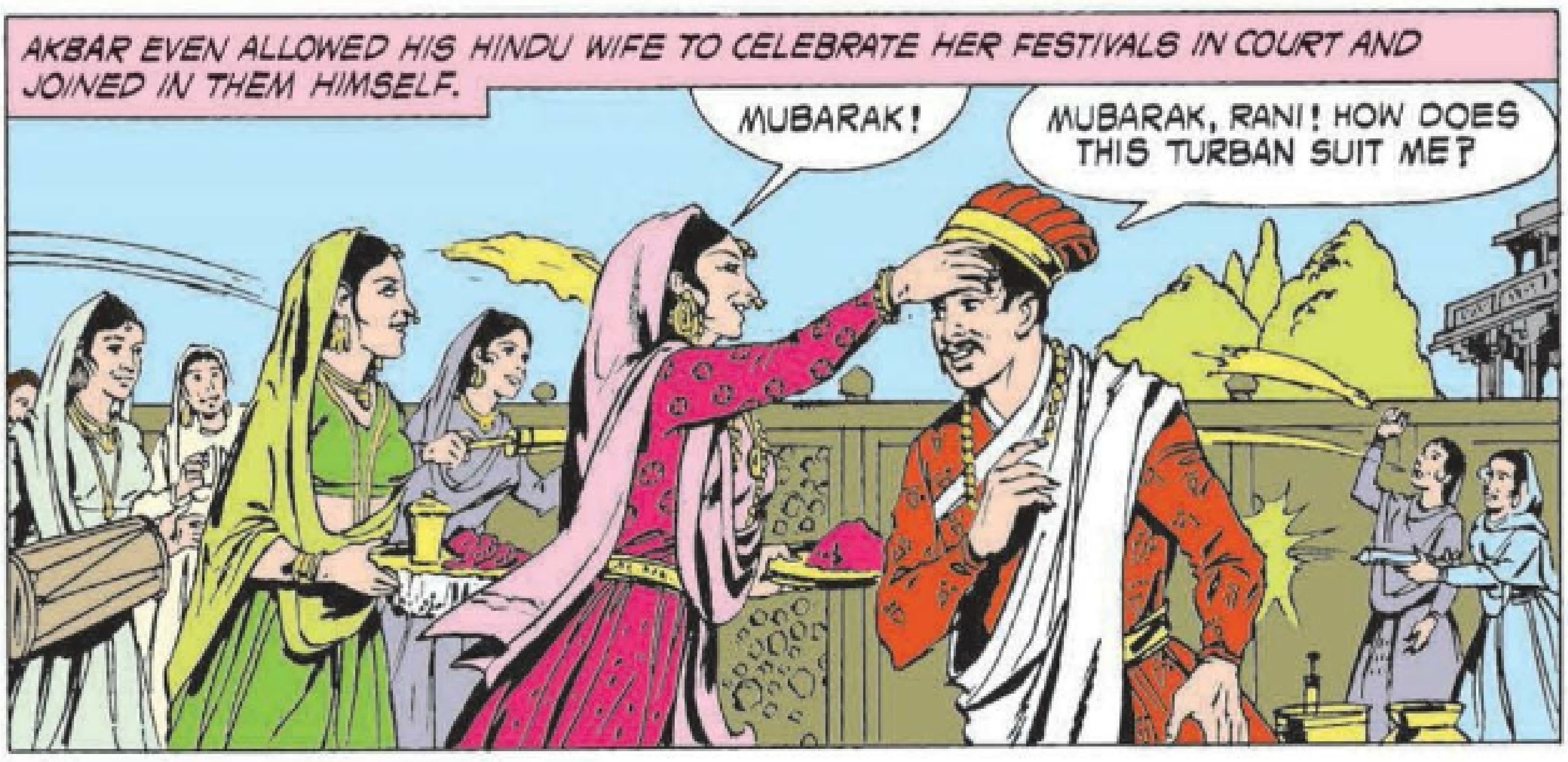


THE APPOINTMENT OF THE RAJPUTS, BHAGWANDAS AND MAN SINGH, WAS IN LINE WITH HIS SECULAR BELIEFS. MAN SINGH, THE GRANDSON OF THE RAJA OF AMBER, BECAME A CLOSE ASSOCIATE —

MY LORD, YOUR HINDU SUBJECTS ARE PRAISING YOU FOR ABOLISHING THE HATEFUL JIZYA* TAX.
I AM GLAD MY SUBJECTS ARE HAPPY. THEIR LOYALTY IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN THEIR FAITHS, MAN SINGH.

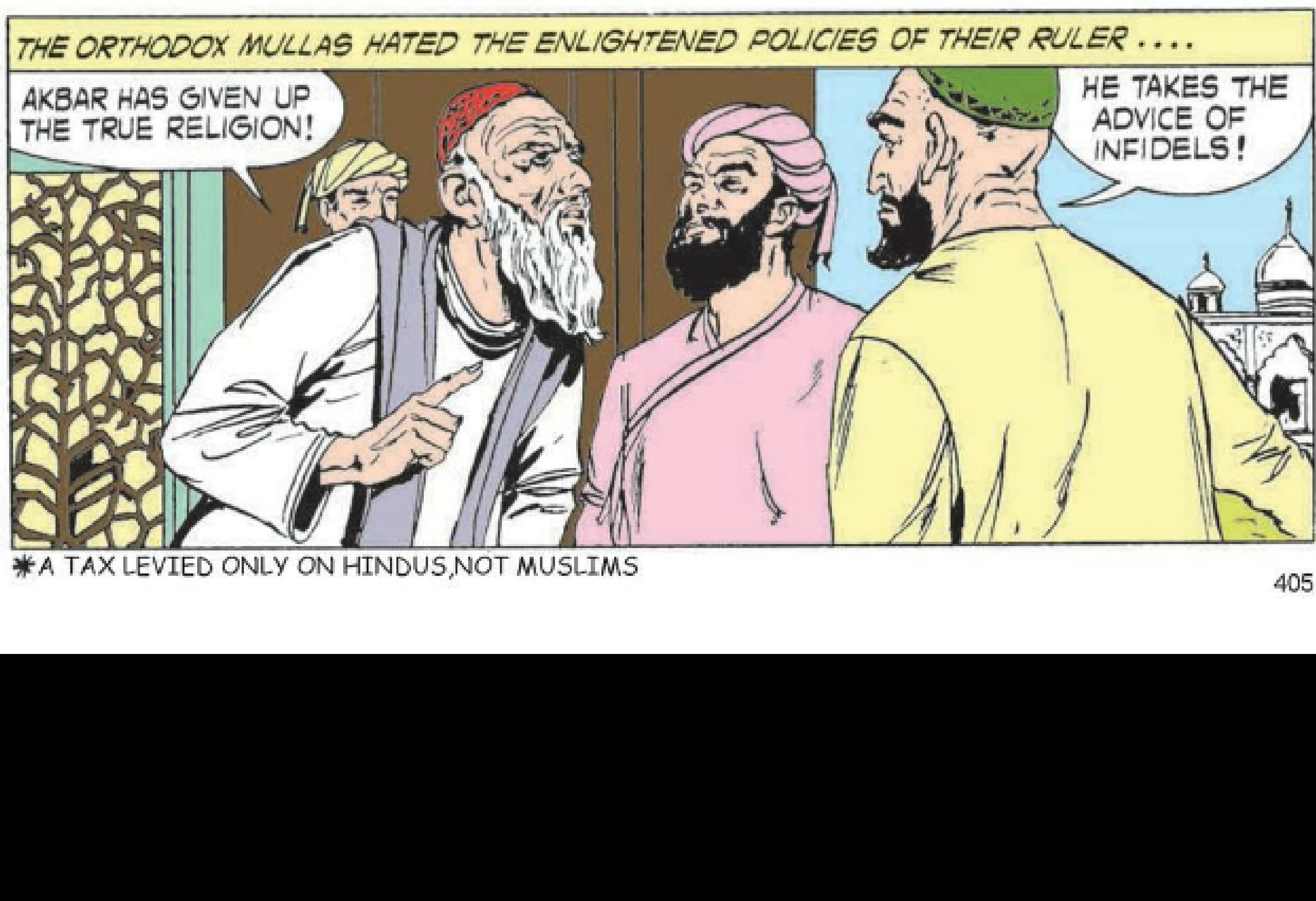


I WISH SOME OF YOUR MULLAS WOULD SEE IT THAT WAY TOO!
WHAT'S TO BE DONE ZEALOTS THINK THERE IS ONLY ONE PATH TO HEAVEN.



AKBAR EVEN ALLOWED HIS HINDU WIFE TO CELEBRATE HER FESTIVALS IN COURT AND JOINED IN THEM HIMSELF.

MUBARAK!
MUBARAK, RANI! HOW DOES THIS TURBAN SUIT ME?



THE ORTHODOX MULLAS HATED THE ENLIGHTENED POLICIES OF THEIR RULER ....

AKBAR HAS GIVEN UP THE TRUE RELIGION!
HE TAKES THE ADVICE OF INFIDELS!

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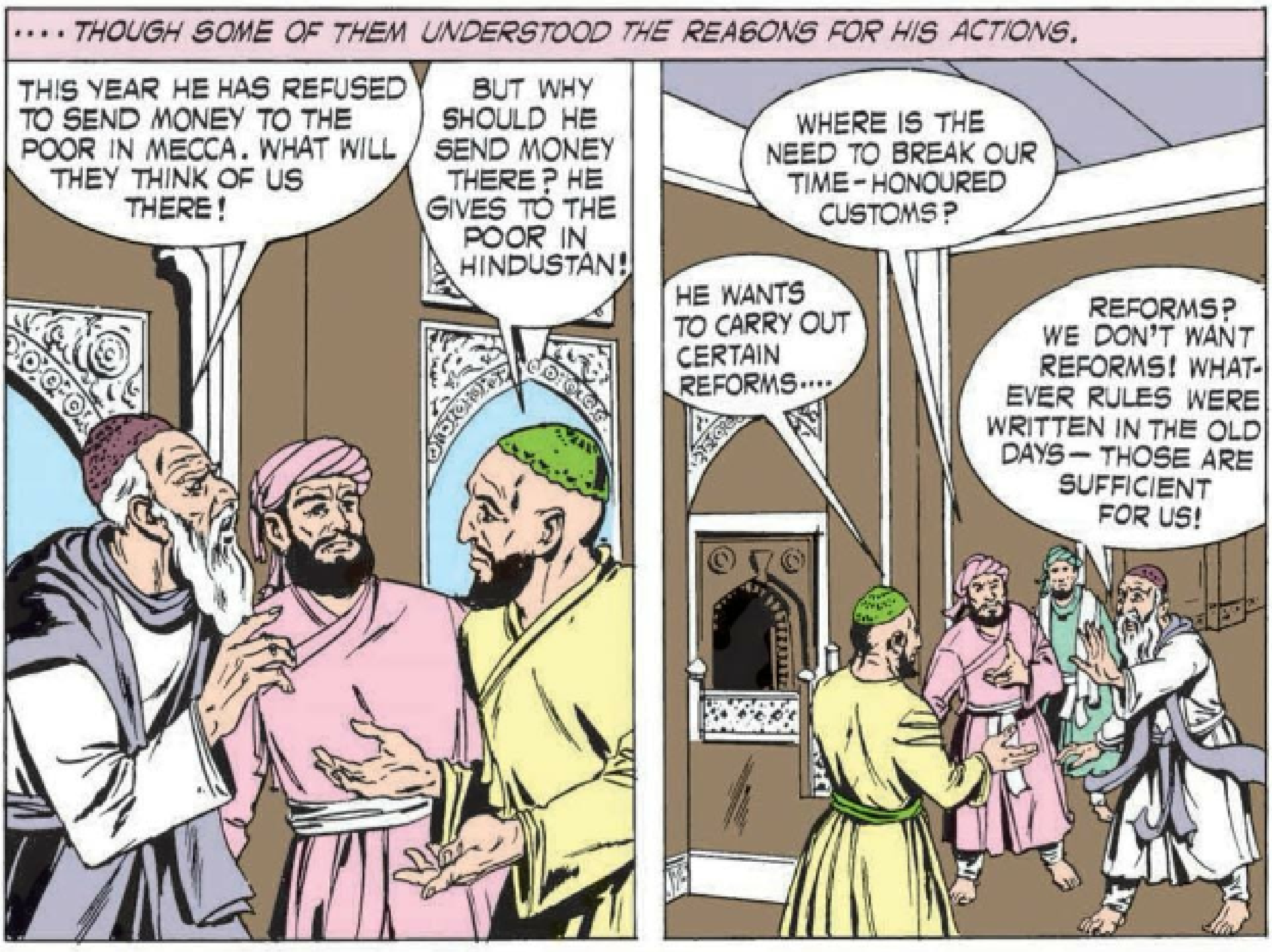
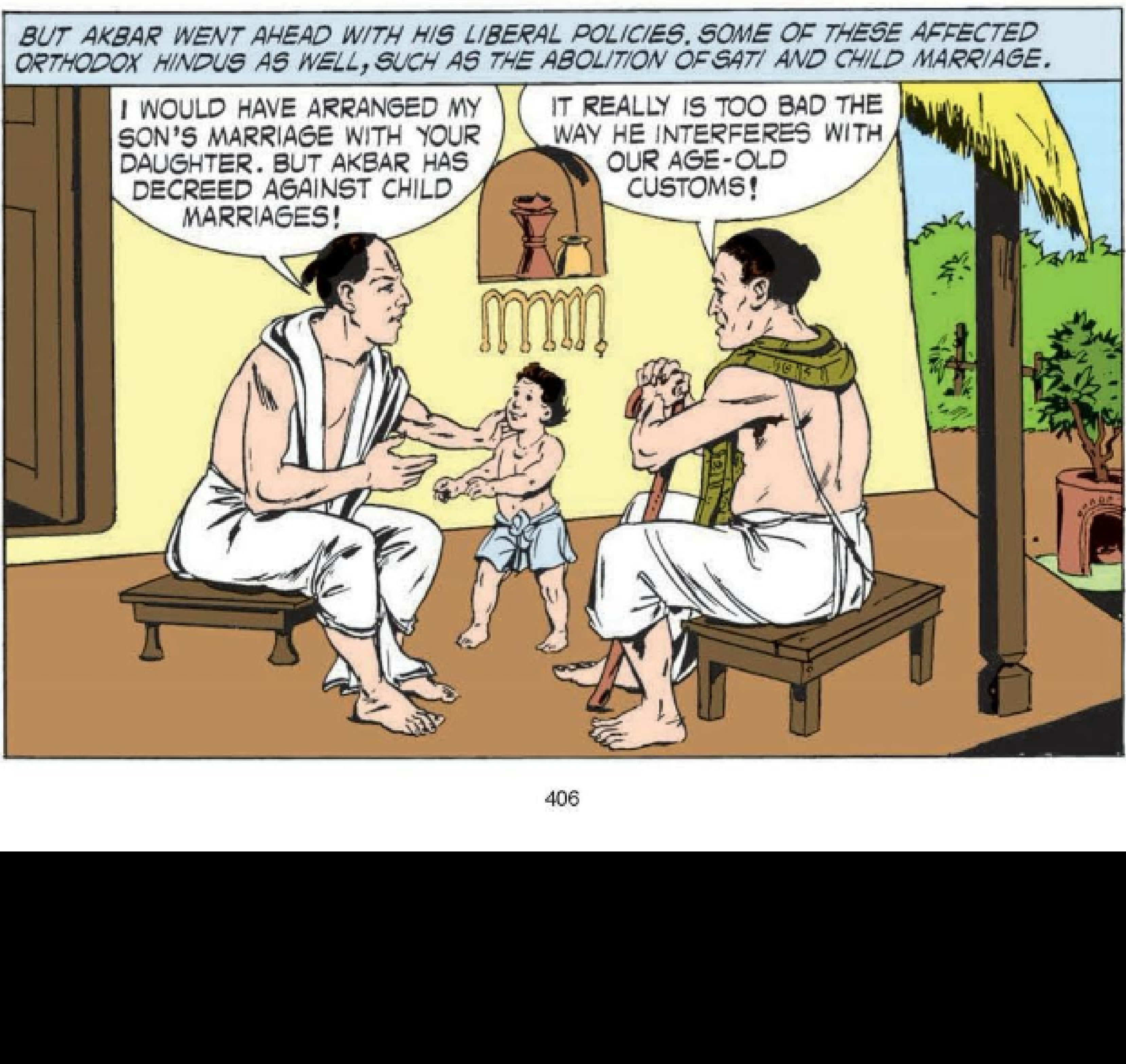
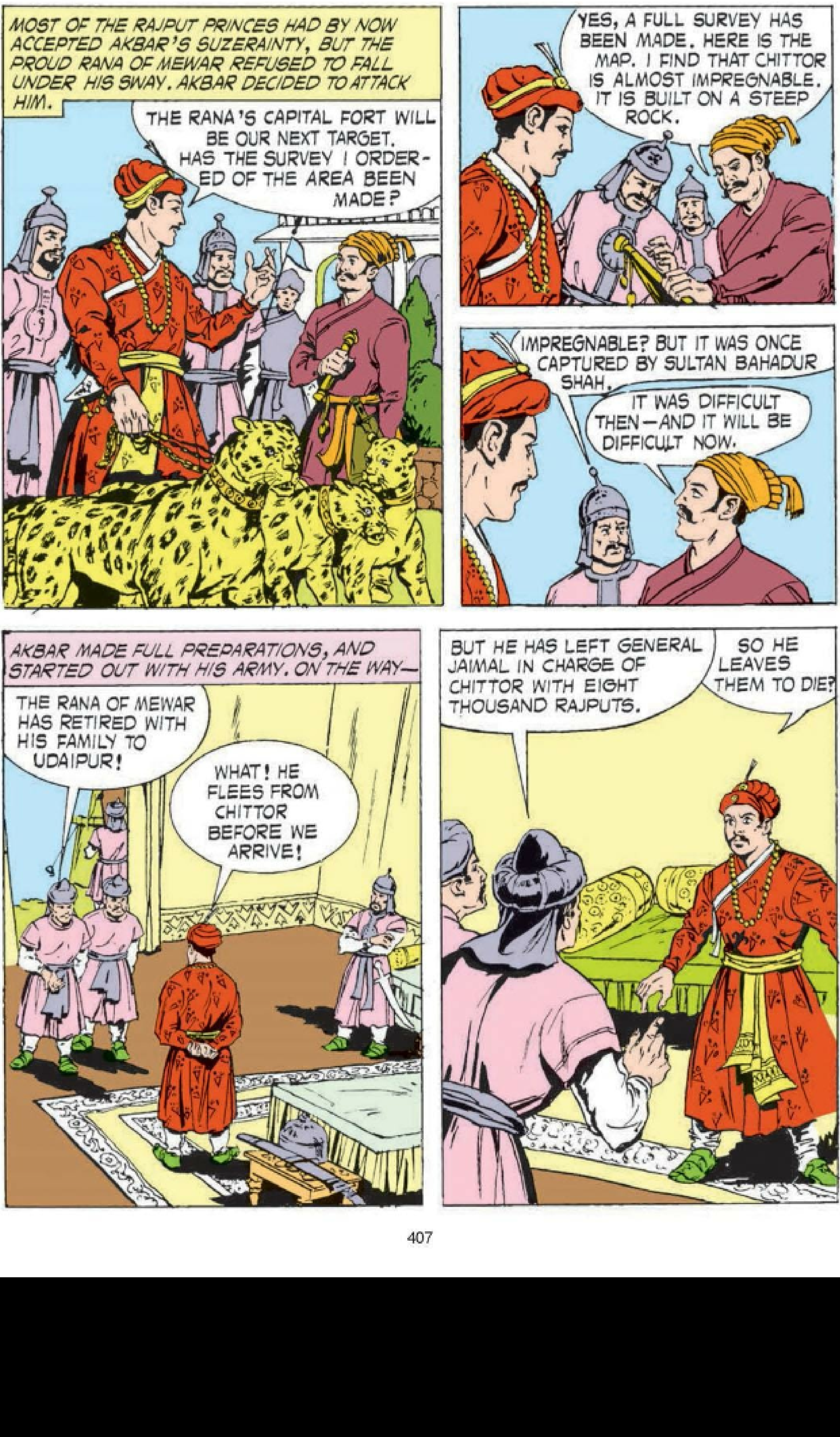
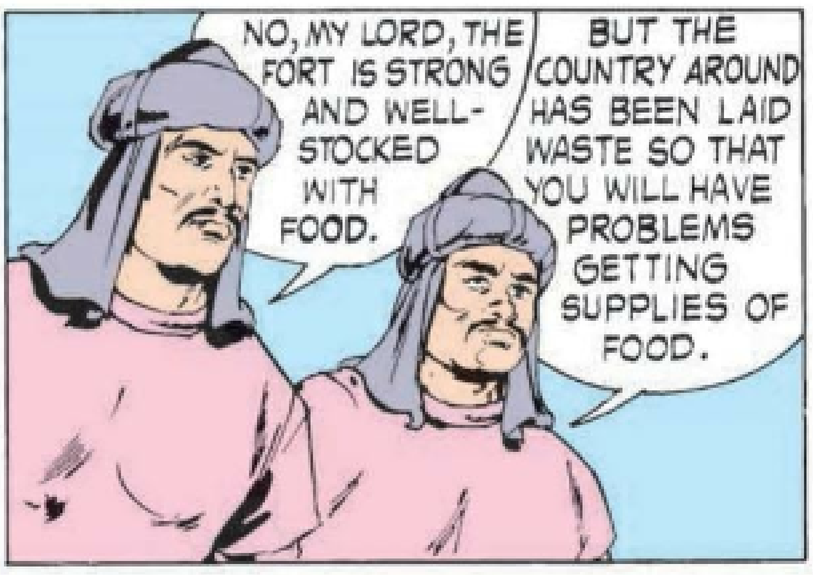
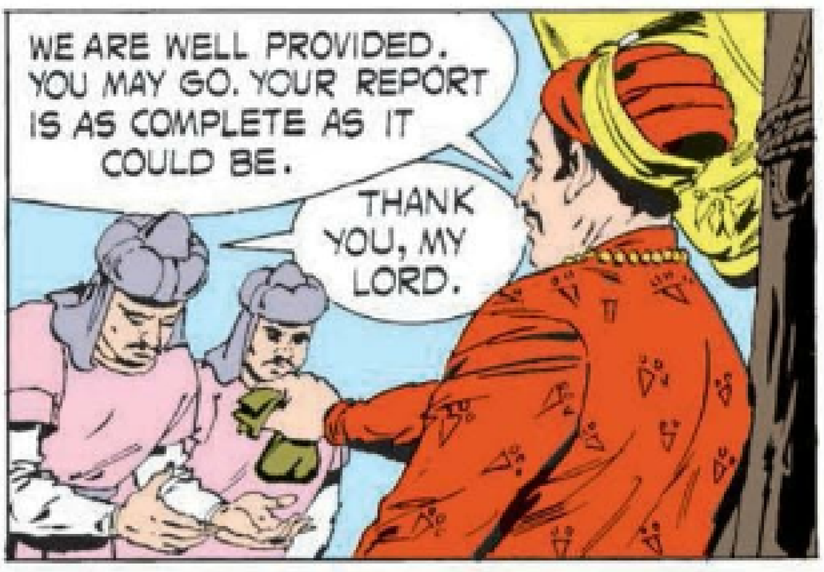
*A TAX LEVIED ONLY ON HINDUS, NOT MUSLIMS

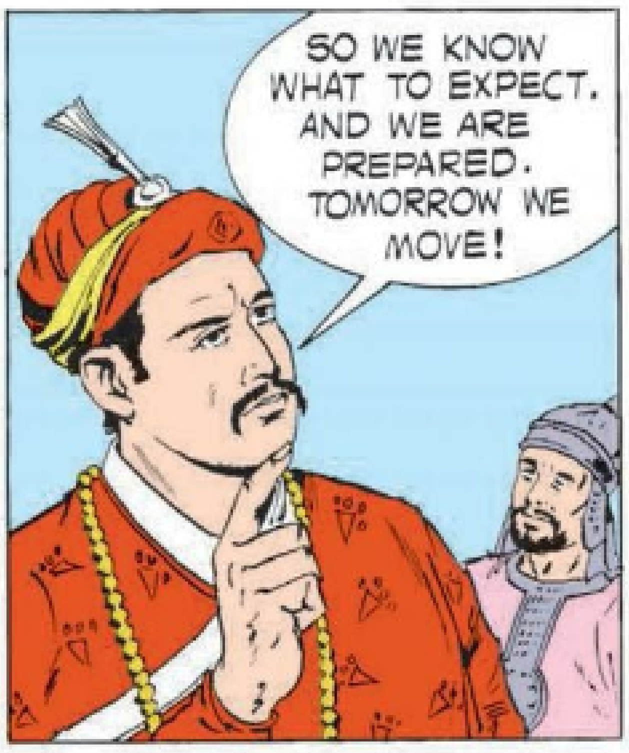

.... THOUGH SOME OF THEM UNDERSTOOD THE REASONS FOR HIS ACTIONS.
THIS YEAR HE HAS REFUSED TO SEND MONEY TO THE POOR IN MECCA. WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF US THERE!
BUT WHY SHOULD HE SEND MONEY THERE? HE GIVES TO THE POOR IN HINDUSTAN!
WHERE IS THE NEED TO BREAK OUR TIME-HONOURED CUSTOMS?
HE WANTS TO CARRY OUT CERTAIN REFORMS....
REFORMS? WE DON'T WANT REFORMS! WHATEVER RULES WERE WRITTEN IN THE OLD DAYS— THOSE ARE SUFFICIENT FOR US!


BUT AKBAR WENT AHEAD WITH HIS LIBERAL POLICIES. SOME OF THESE AFFECTED ORTHODOX HINDUS AS WELL, SUCH AS THE ABOLITION OF SATI AND CHILD MARRIAGE.
I WOULD HAVE ARRANGED MY SON'S MARRIAGE WITH YOUR DAUGHTER. BUT AKBAR HAS DECREED AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGES!
IT REALLY IS TOO BAD THE WAY HE INTERFERES WITH OUR AGE-OLD CUSTOMS!

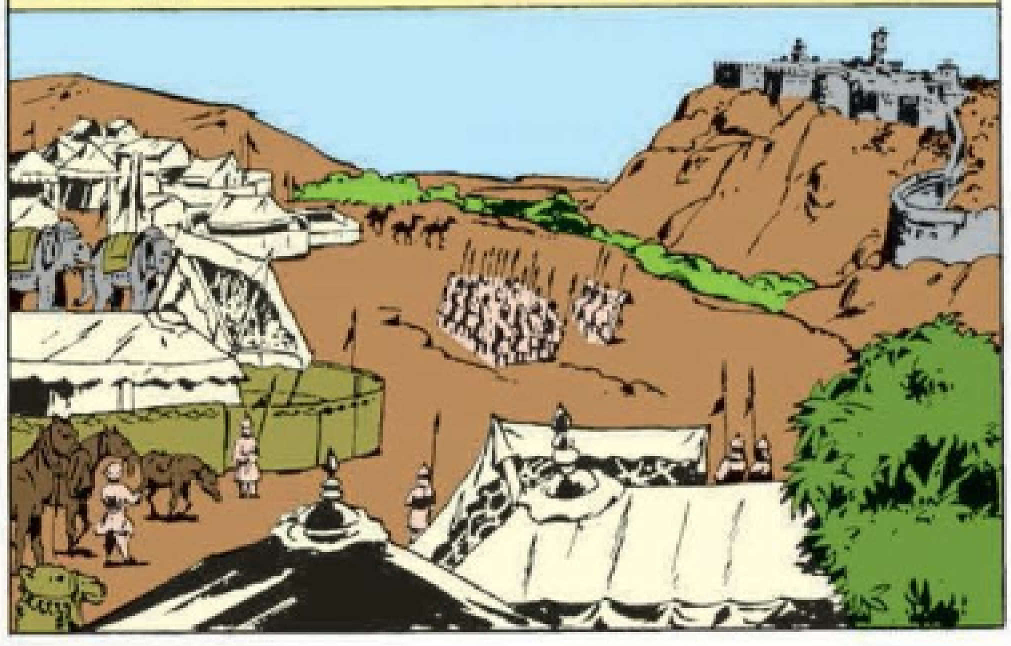

MOST OF THE RAJPUT PRINCES HAD BY NOW ACCEPTED AKBAR'S SUZERAINTY, BUT THE PROUD RANA OF MEWAR REFUSED TO FALL UNDER HIS SWAY. AKBAR DECIDED TO ATTACK HIM.
THE RANA'S CAPITAL FORT WILL BE OUR NEXT TARGET. HAS THE SURVEY I ORDERED OF THE AREA BEEN MADE?
YES, A FULL SURVEY HAS BEEN MADE. HERE IS THE MAP. I FIND THAT CHITTOR IS ALMOST IMPREGNABLE. IT IS BUILT ON A STEEP ROCK.
IMPREGNABLE? BUT IT WAS ONCE CAPTURED BY SULTAN BAHADUR SHAH.
IT WAS DIFFICULT THEN—AND IT WILL BE DIFFICULT NOW.
AKBAR MADE FULL PREPARATIONS, AND STARTED OUT WITH HIS ARMY. ON THE WAY—
THE RANA OF MEWAR HAS RETIRED WITH HIS FAMILY TO UDAIPUR!
WHAT! HE FLEES FROM CHITTOR BEFORE WE ARRIVE!
BUT HE HAS LEFT GENERAL JAIMAL IN CHARGE OF CHITTOR WITH EIGHT THOUSAND RAJPUTS.
SO HE LEAVES THEM TO DIE?

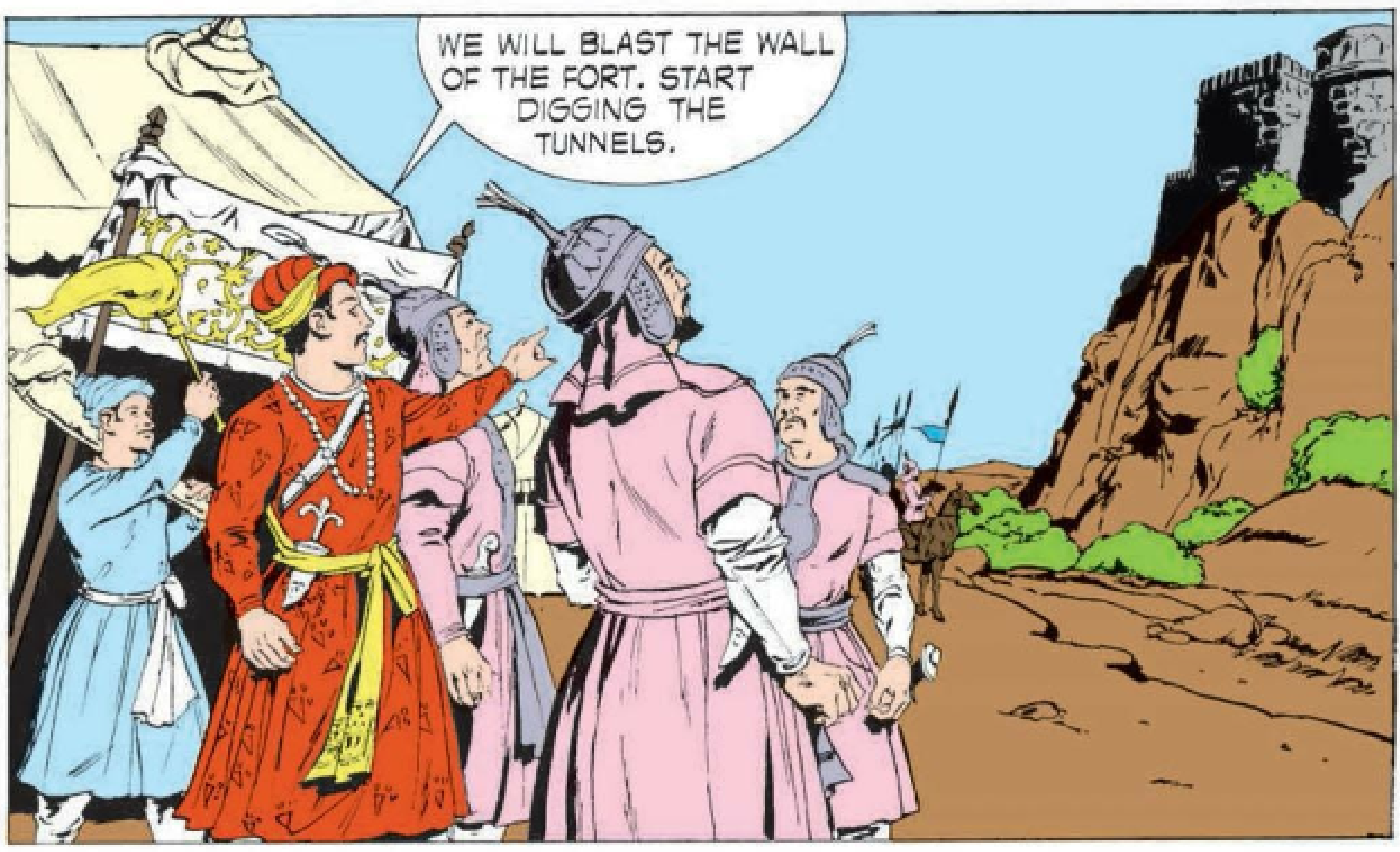

NO, MY LORD, THE FORT IS STRONG AND WELL-STOCKED WITH FOOD.
BUT THE COUNTRY AROUND HAS BEEN LAID WASTE SO THAT YOU WILL HAVE PROBLEMS GETTING SUPPLIES OF FOOD.

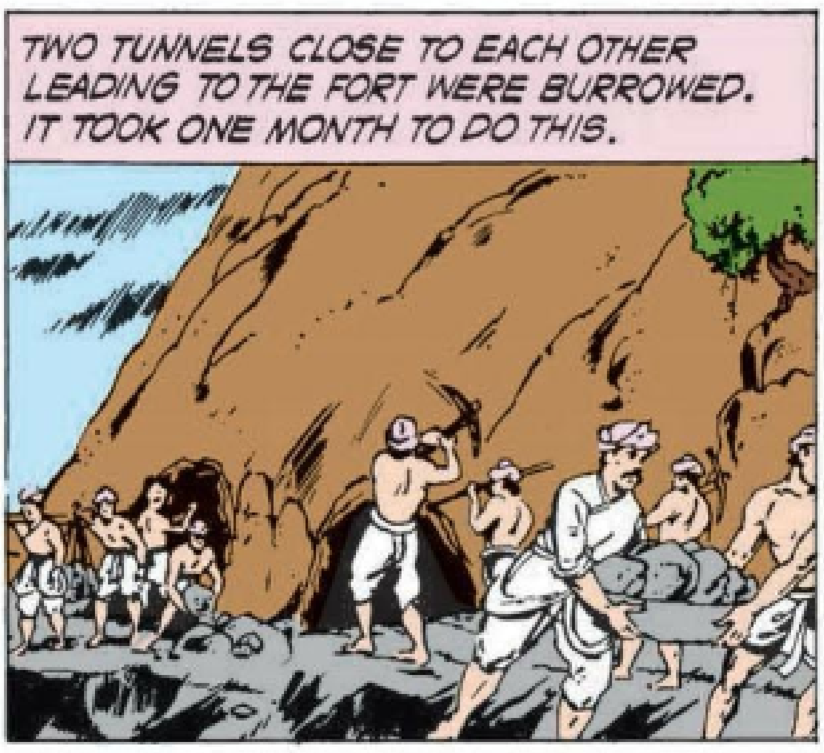

WE ARE WELL PROVIDED. YOU MAY GO. YOUR REPORT IS AS COMPLETE AS IT COULD BE.
THANK YOU, MY LORD.

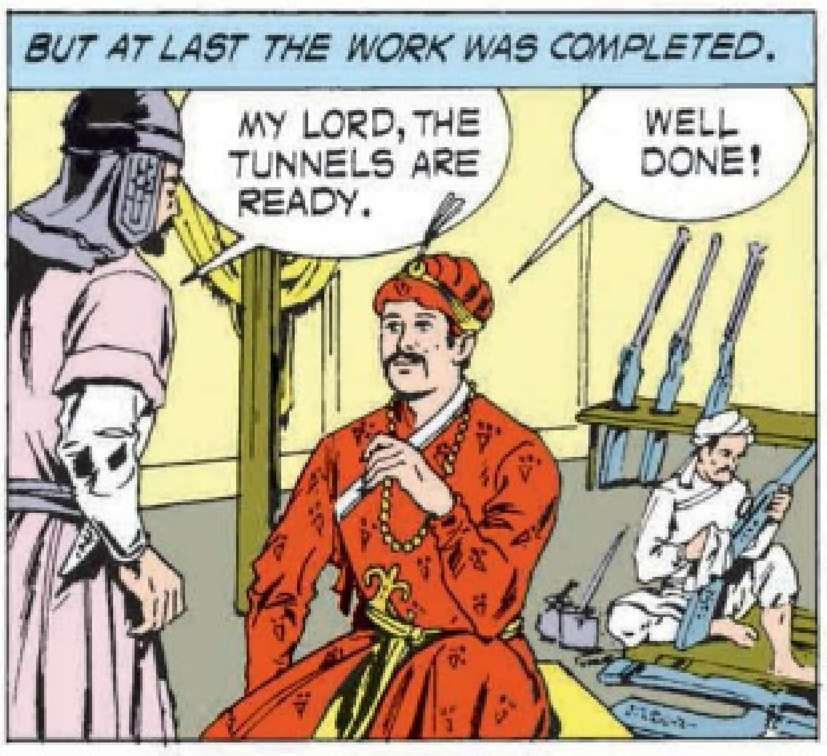

SO WE KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. AND WE ARE PREPARED. TOMORROW WE MOVE!

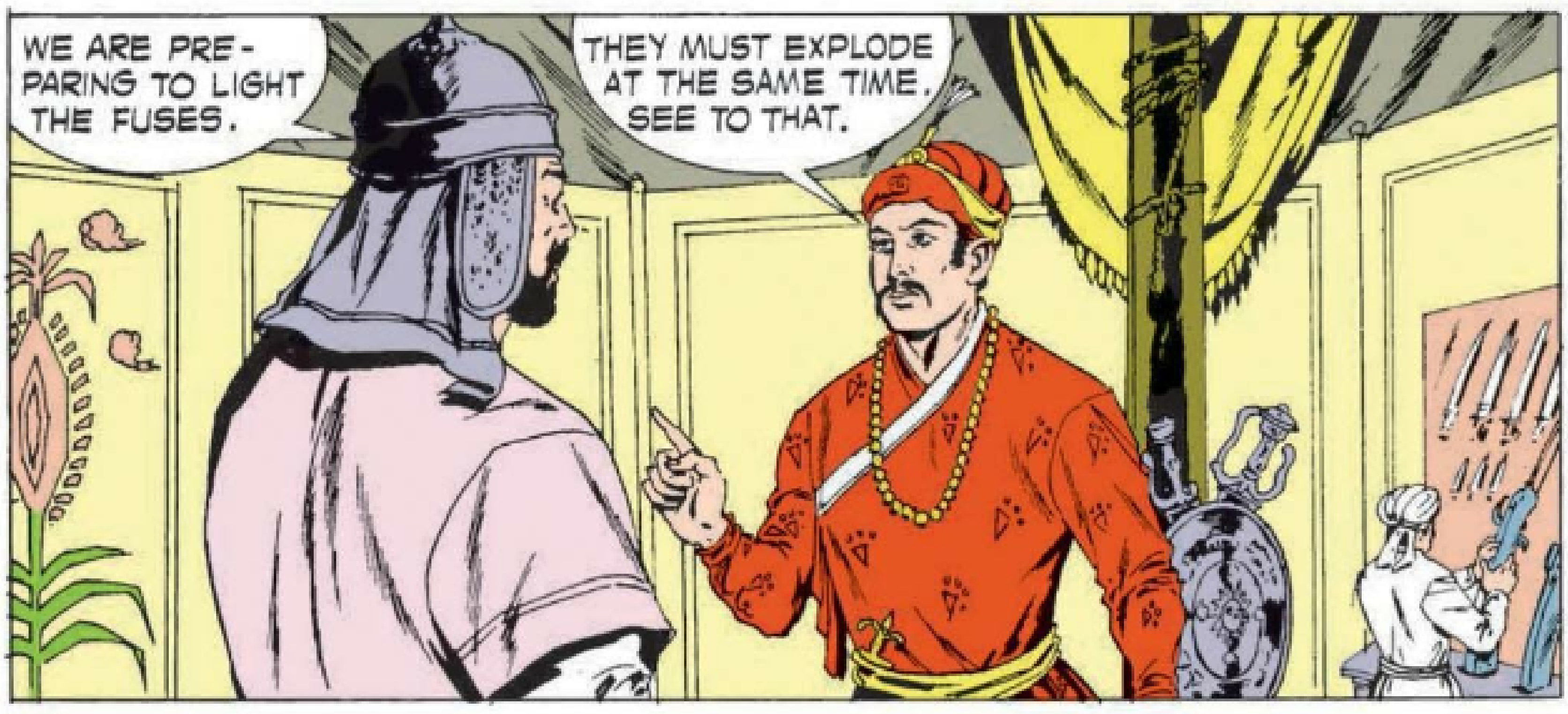
AKBAR MARCHED TO CHITTOR AND ENCAMPED BELOW THE FORT. HIS CAMP EXTENDED FOR OVER TEN MILES.

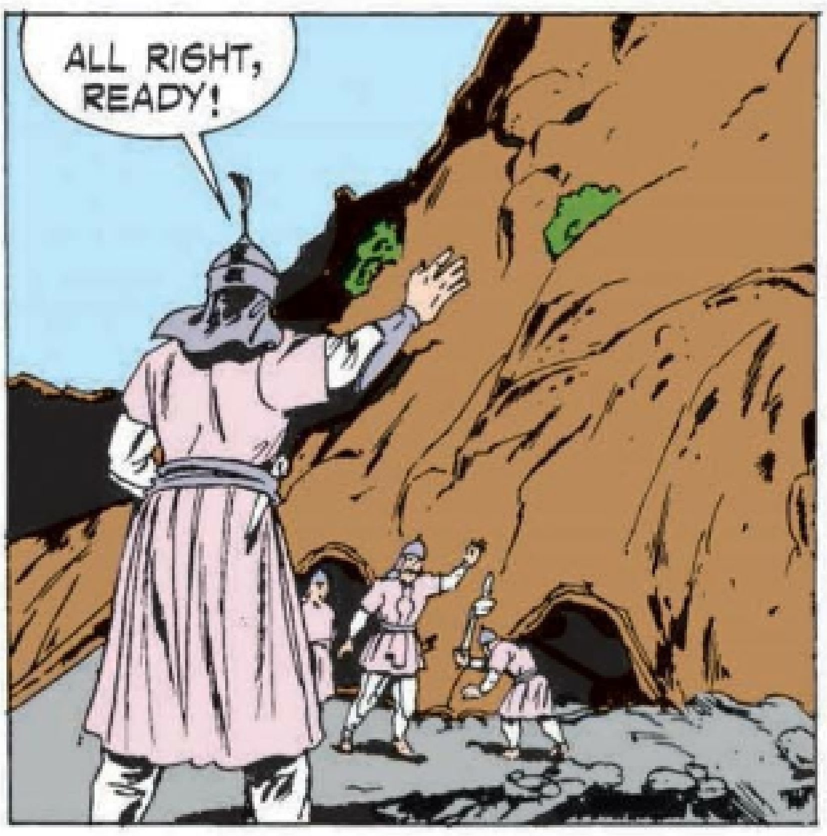


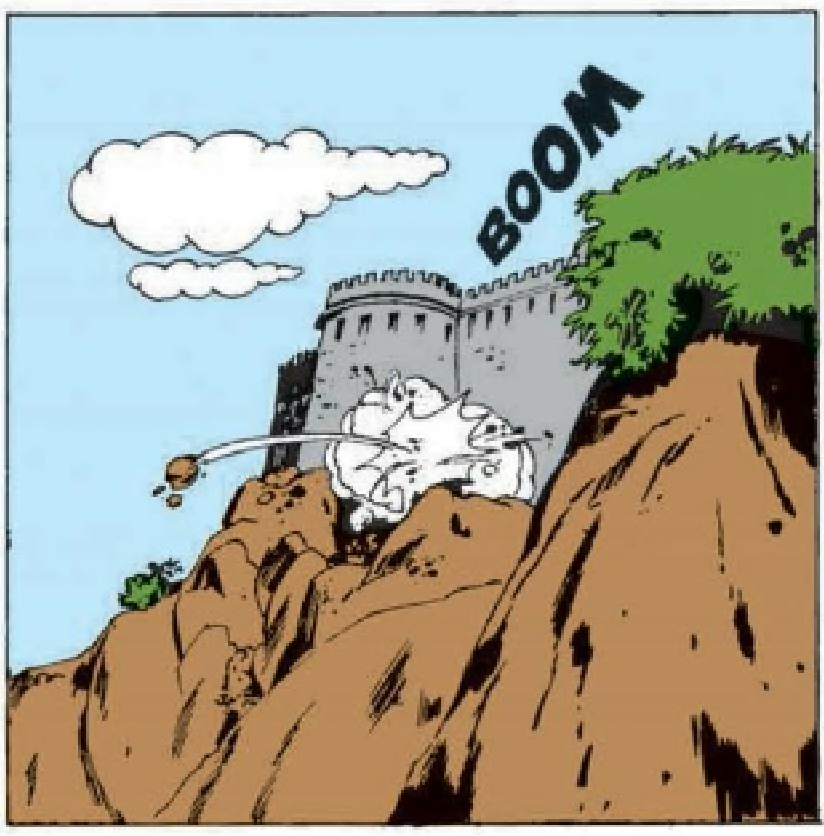

WE WILL BLAST THE WALL OF THE FORT. START DIGGING THE TUNNELS.

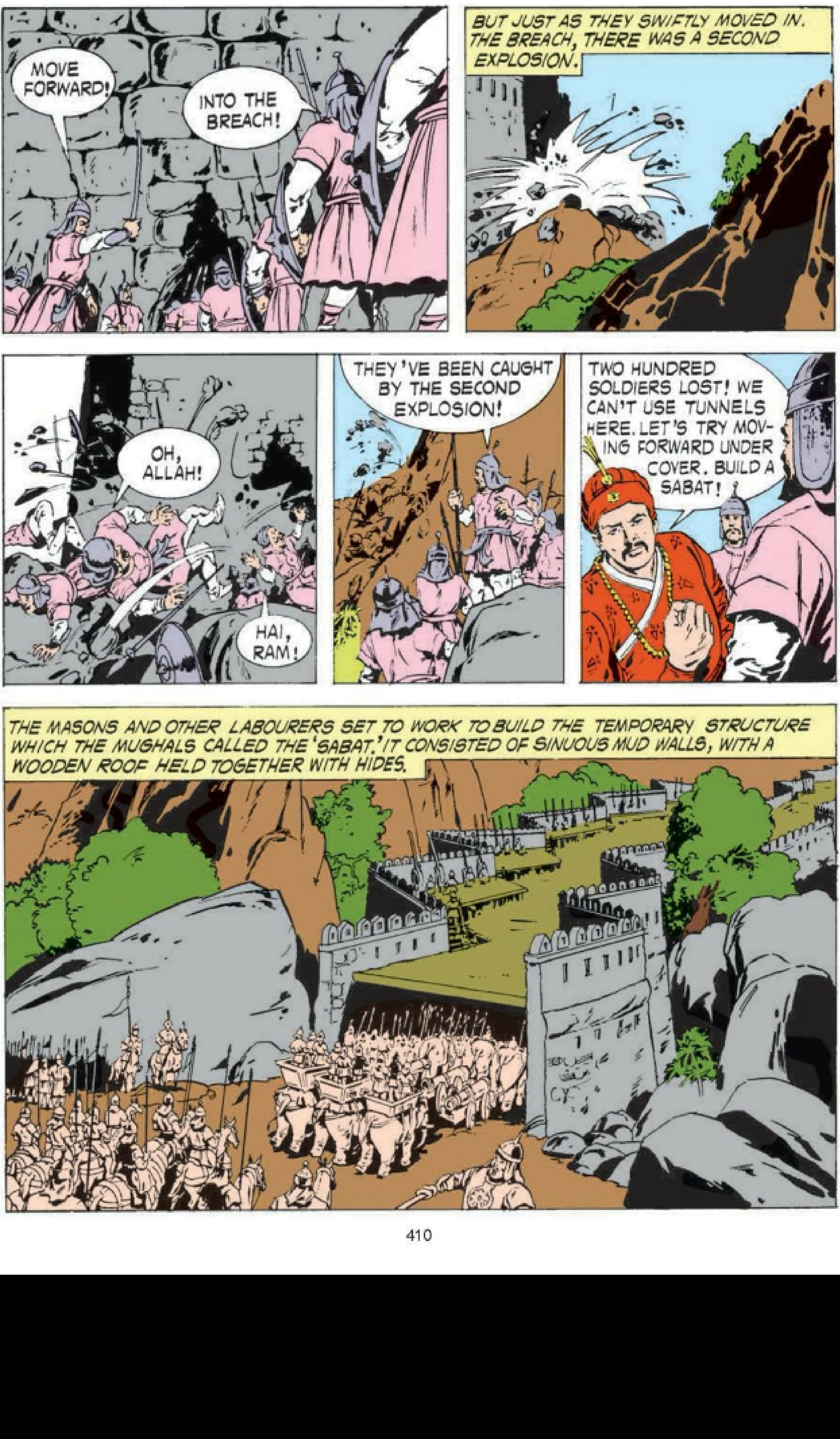

TWO TUNNELS CLOSE TO EACH OTHER LEADING TO THE FORT WERE BURROWED. IT TOOK ONE MONTH TO DO THIS.


BUT AT LAST THE WORK WAS COMPLETED.
MY LORD, THE TUNNELS ARE READY.
WELL DONE!


WE ARE PREPARING TO LIGHT THE FUSES.
THEY MUST EXPLODE AT THE SAME TIME. SEE TO THAT.


ALL RIGHT, READY!

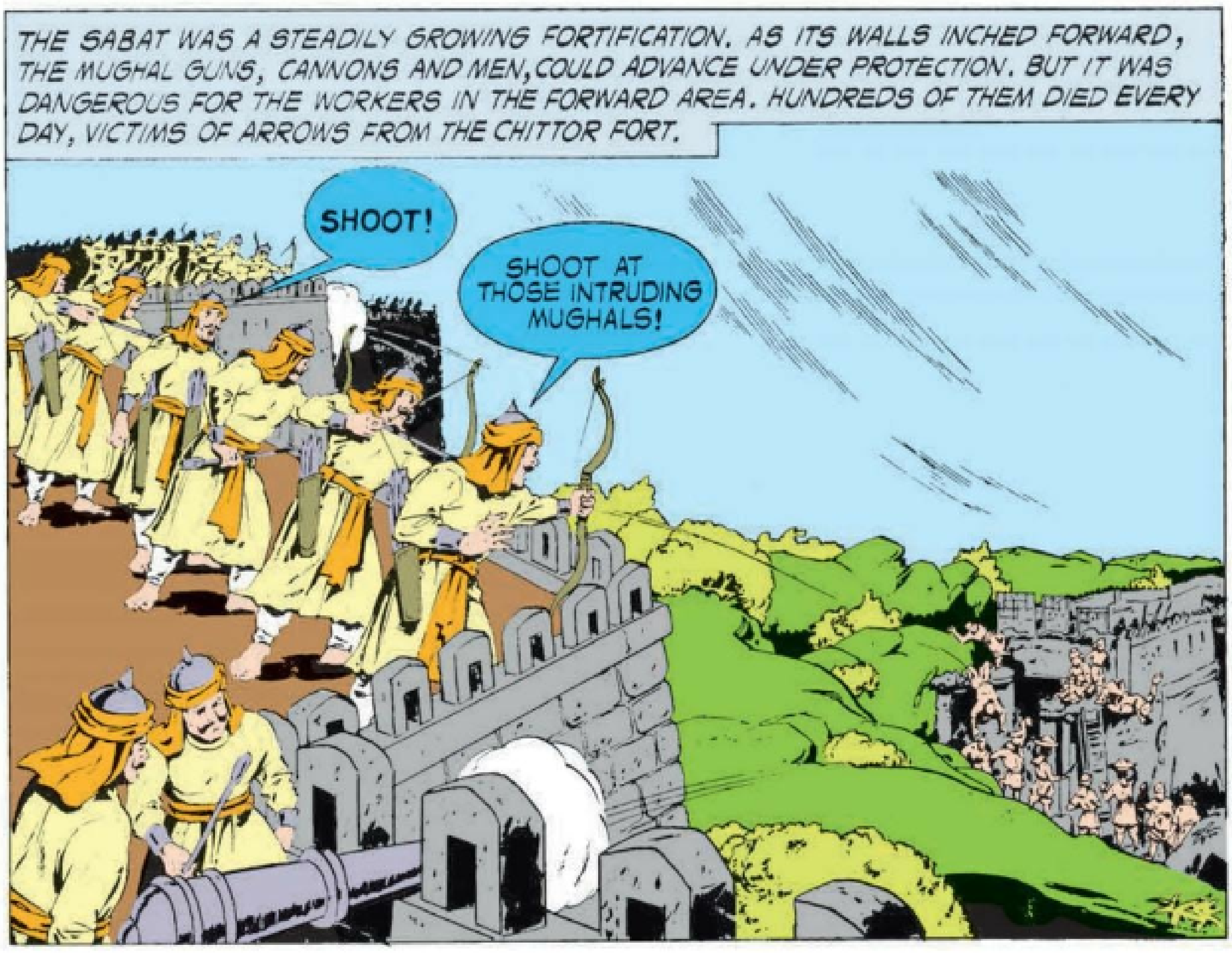

BOOM


BUT JUST AS THEY SWIFTLY MOVED IN. THE BREACH, THERE WAS A SECOND EXPLOSION.

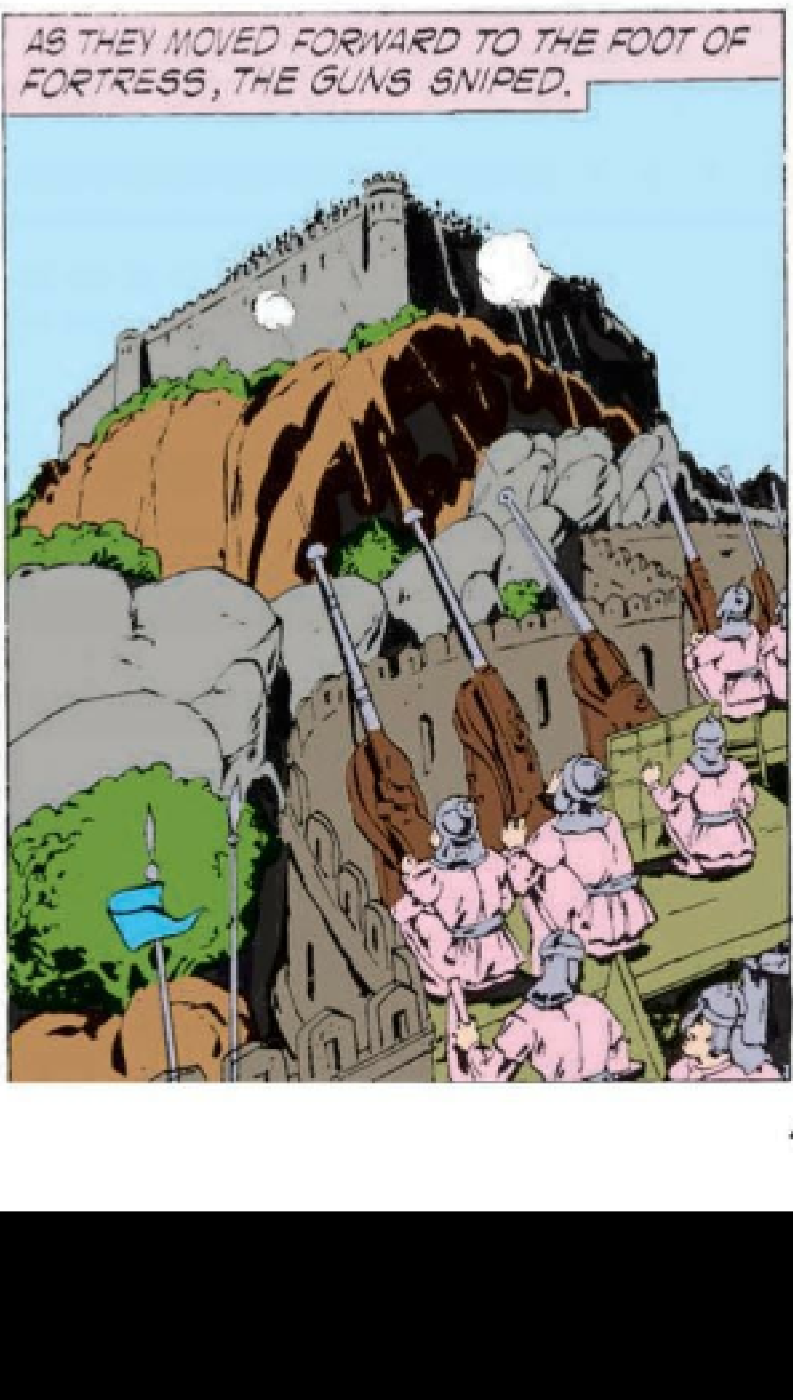
THE MASONS AND OTHER LABOURERS SET TO WORK TO BUILD THE TEMPORARY STRUCTURE WHICH THE MUGHALS CALLED THE 'SABAT.' IT CONSISTED OF SINUOUS MUD WALLS, WITH A WOODEN ROOF HELD TOGETHER WITH HIDES.

MOVE FORWARD!
INTO THE BREACH!
OH, ALLAH!
HAI, RAM!
THEY'VE BEEN CAUGHT BY THE SECOND EXPLOSION!
TWO HUNDRED SOLDIERS LOST! WE CAN'T USE TUNNELS HERE. LET'S TRY MOVING FORWARD UNDER COVER. BUILD A SABAT!

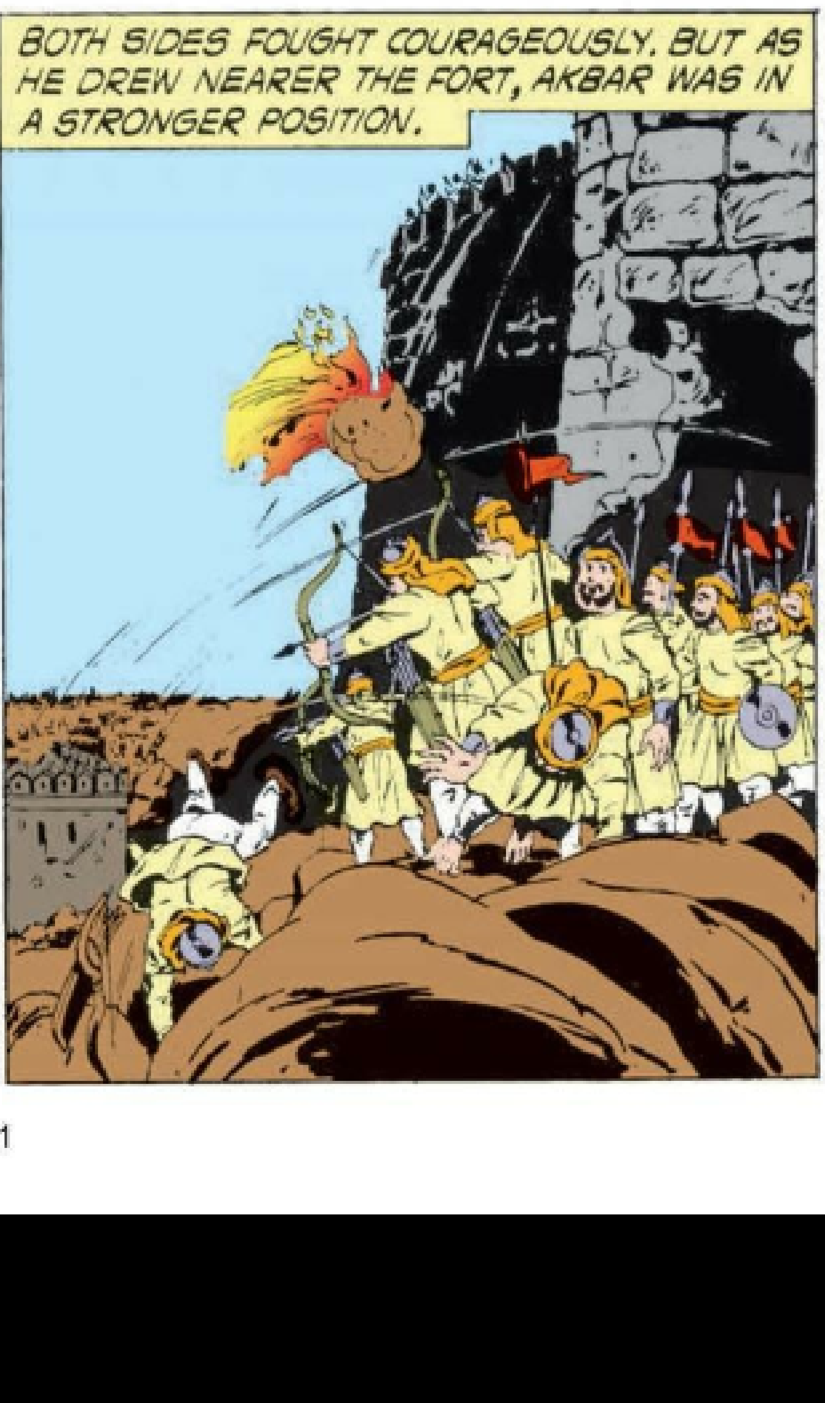
THE SABAT WAS A STEADILY GROWING FORTIFICATION. AS ITS WALLS INCHED FORWARD, THE MUGHAL GUNS, CANNONS AND MEN, COULD ADVANCE UNDER PROTECTION. BUT IT WAS DANGEROUS FOR THE WORKERS IN THE FORWARD AREA. HUNDREDS OF THEM DIED EVERY DAY, VICTIMS OF ARROWS FROM THE CHITTOR FORT.

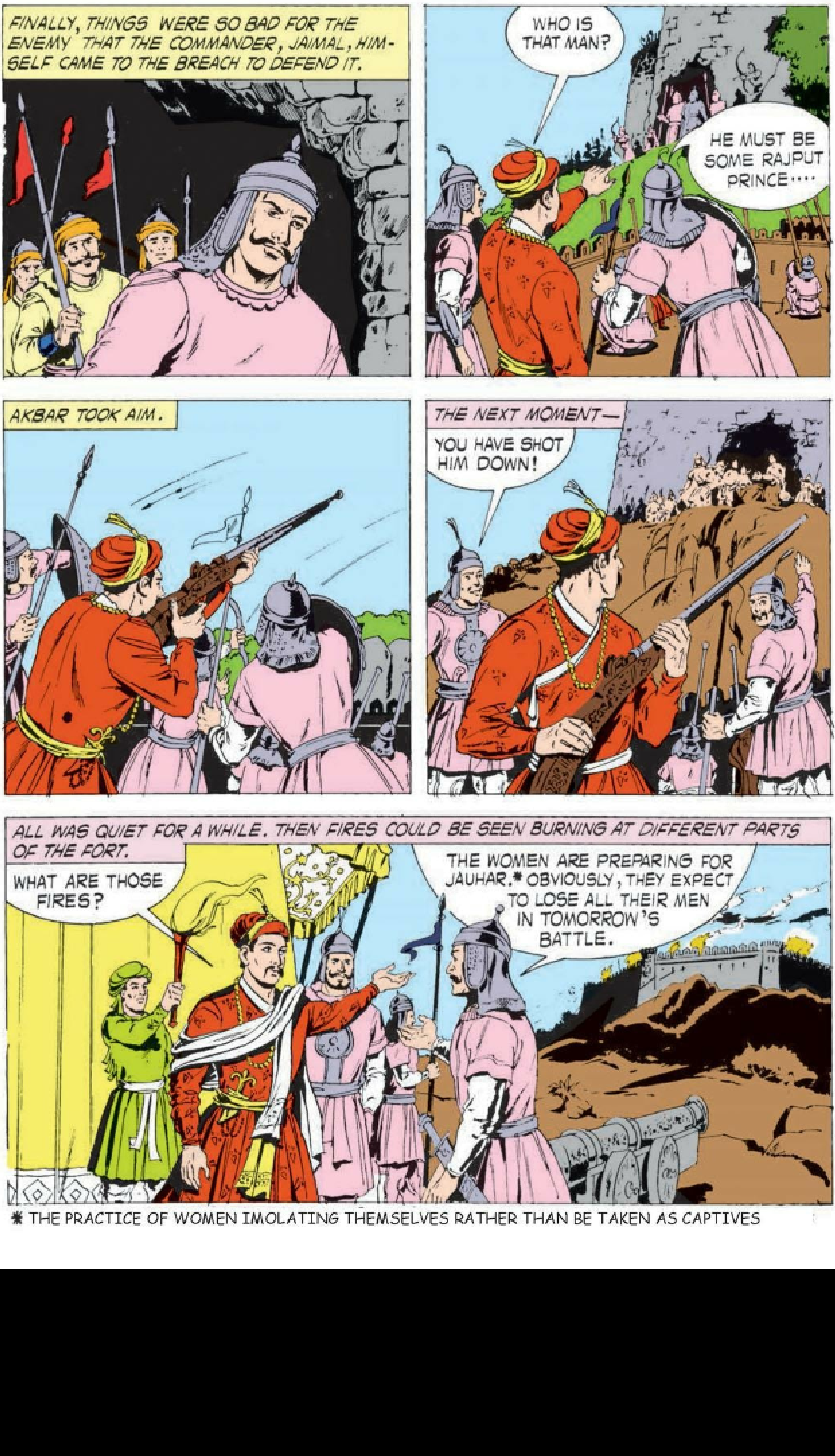

SHOOT!
SHOOT AT THOSE INTRUDING MUGHALS!

AS THEY MOVED FORWARD TO THE FOOT OF FORTRESS, THE GUNS SNIPED.

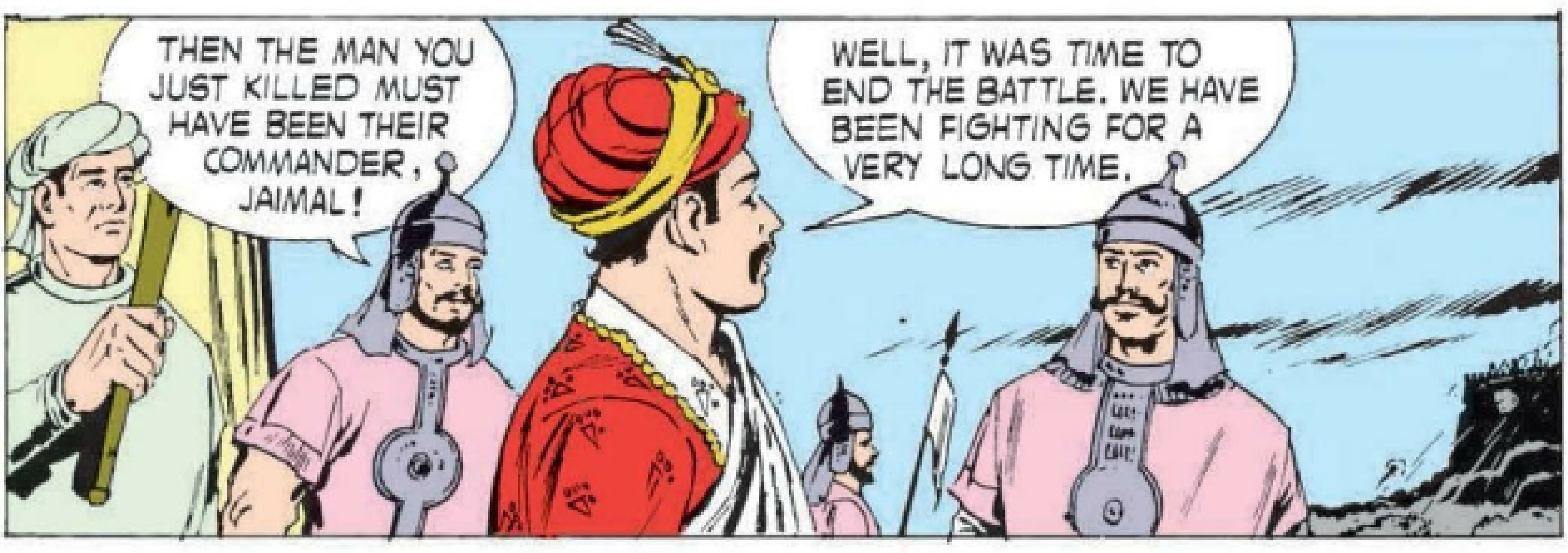


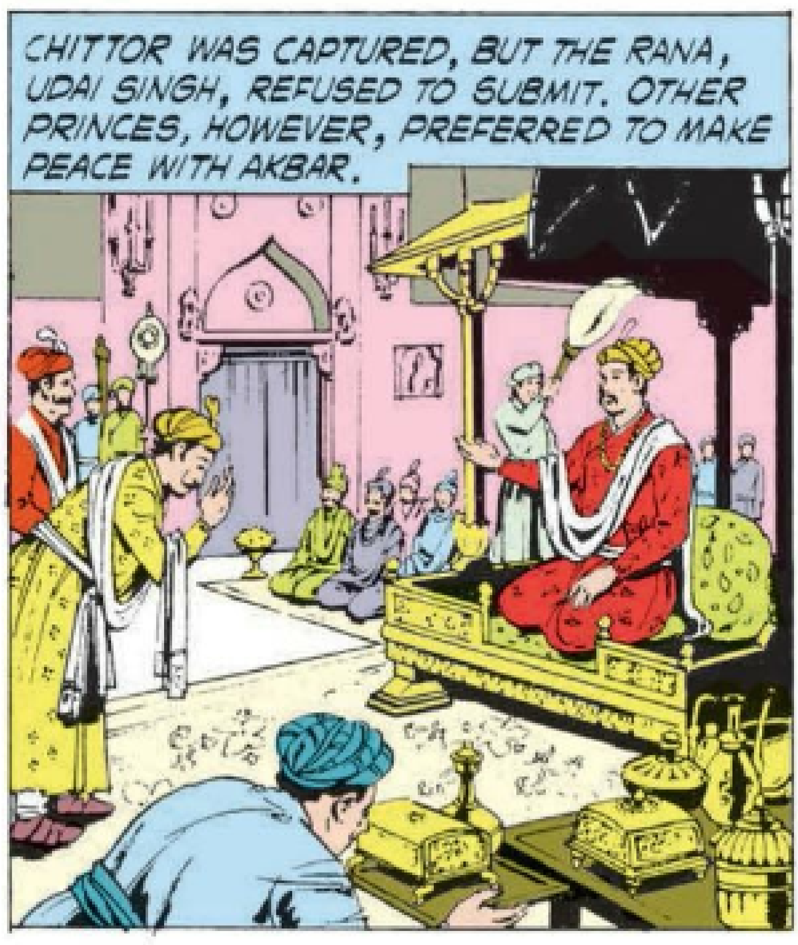
BOTH SIDES FOUGHT COURAGEOUSLY. BUT AS HE DREW NEARER THE FORT, AKBAR WAS IN A STRONGER POSITION.

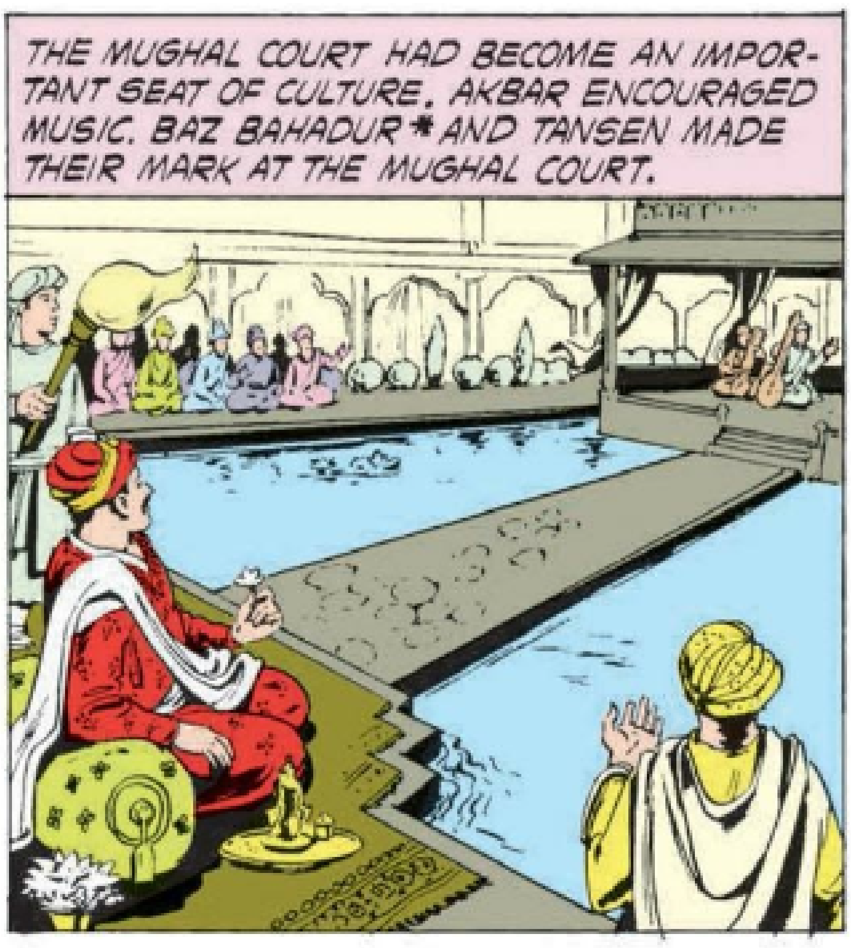


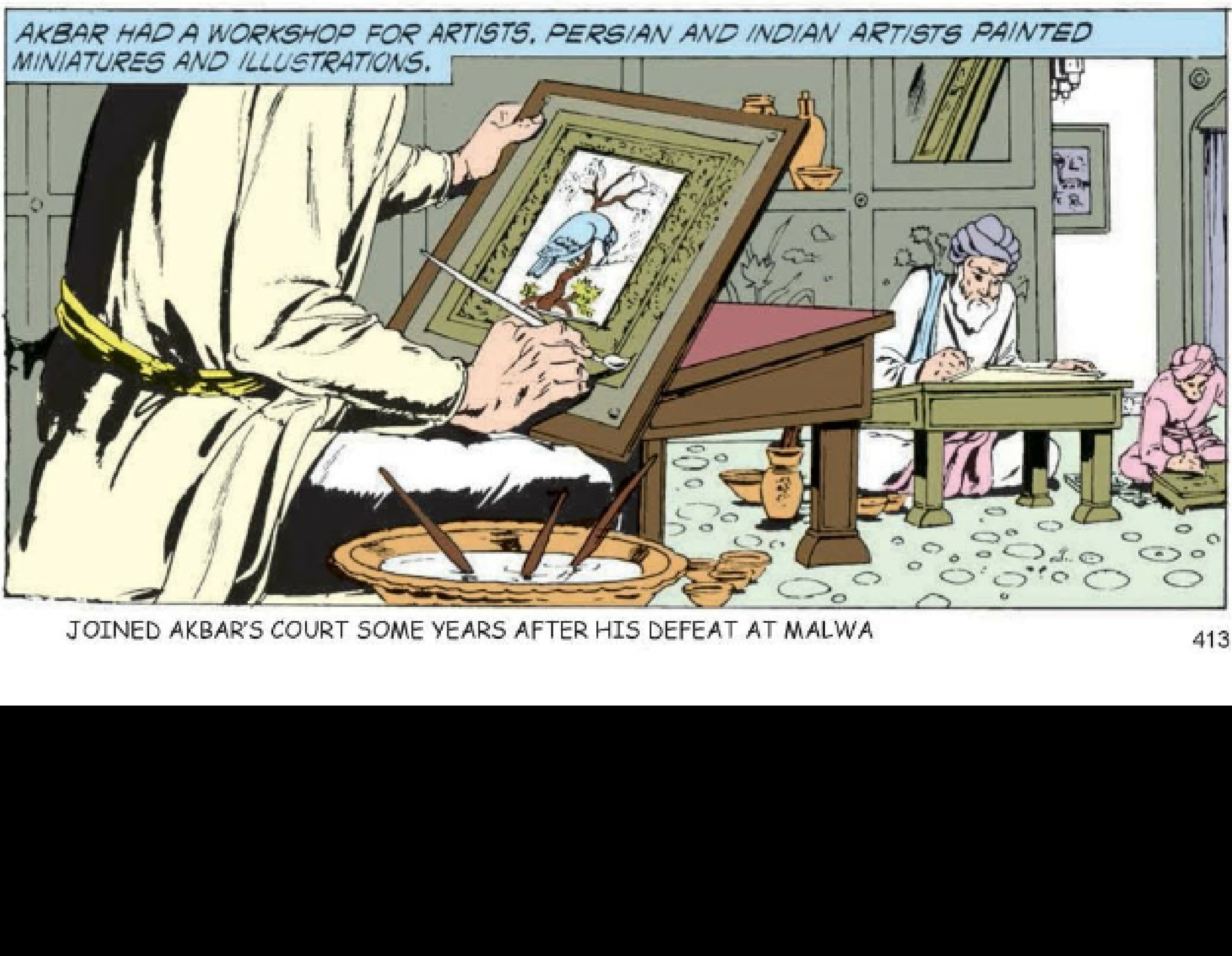

FINALLY, THINGS WERE SO BAD FOR THE ENEMY THAT THE COMMANDER, JAIMAL, HIMSELF CAME TO THE BREACH TO DEFEND IT.
WHO IS THAT MAN?
HE MUST BE SOME RAJPUT PRINCE....
AKBAR TOOK AIM.
THE NEXT MOMENT—
YOU HAVE SHOT HIM DOWN!
ALL WAS QUIET FOR A WHILE. THEN FIRES COULD BE SEEN BURNING AT DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE FORT.
WHAT ARE THOSE FIRES?
THE WOMEN ARE PREPARING FOR JAUHAR.* OBVIOUSLY, THEY EXPECT TO LOSE ALL THEIR MEN IN TOMORROW'S BATTLE.

* THE PRACTICE OF WOMEN IMOLATING THEMSELVES RATHER THAN BE TAKEN AS CAPTIVES


THEN THE MAN YOU JUST KILLED MUST HAVE BEEN THEIR COMMANDER, JAIMAL!
WELL, IT WAS TIME TO END THE BATTLE. WE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR A VERY LONG TIME.


CHITTOR WAS CAPTURED, BUT THE RANA, UDAI SINGH, REFUSED TO SUBMIT. OTHER PRINCES, HOWEVER, PREFERRED TO MAKE PEACE WITH AKBAR.


THE MUGHAL COURT HAD BECOME AN IMPORTANT SEAT OF CULTURE. AKBAR ENCOURAGED MUSIC. BAZ BAHADUR* AND TANSEN MADE THEIR MARK AT THE MUGHAL COURT.


AKBAR HAD A WORKSHOP FOR ARTISTS. PERSIAN AND INDIAN ARTISTS PAINTED MINIATURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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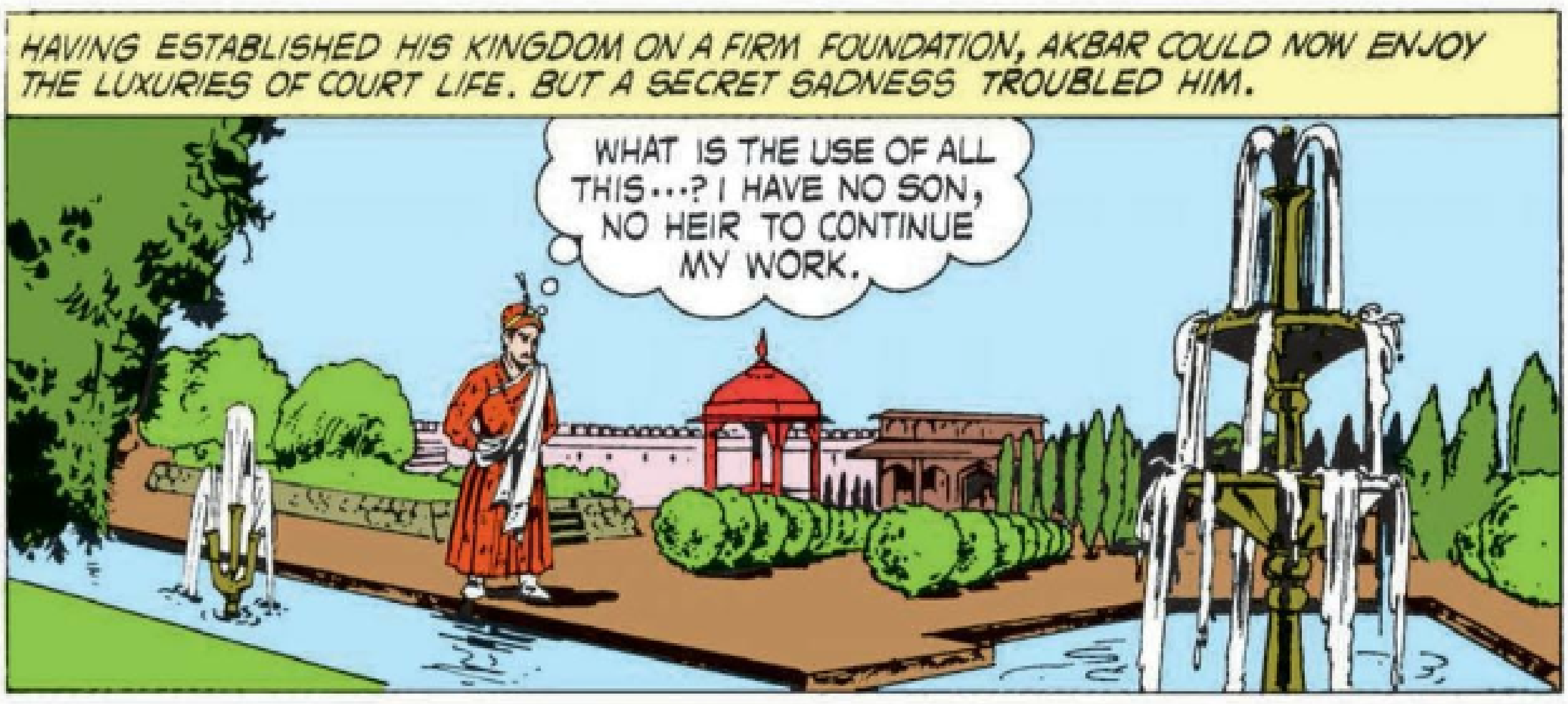
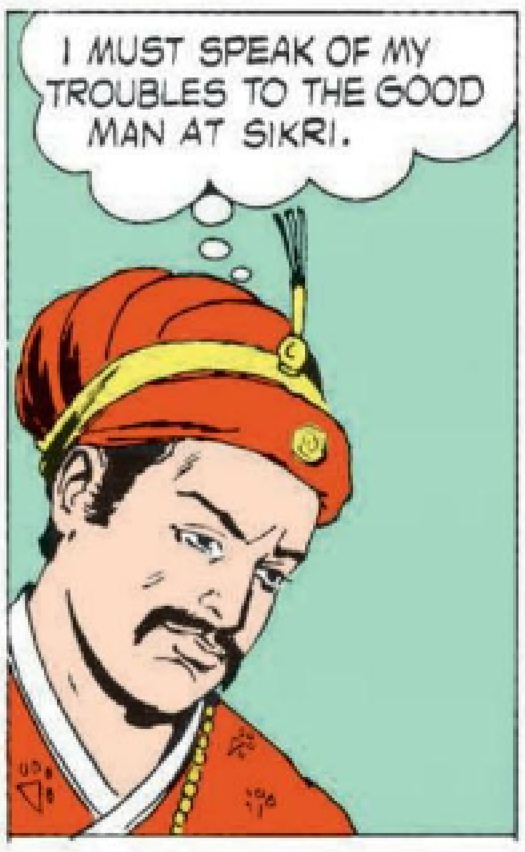
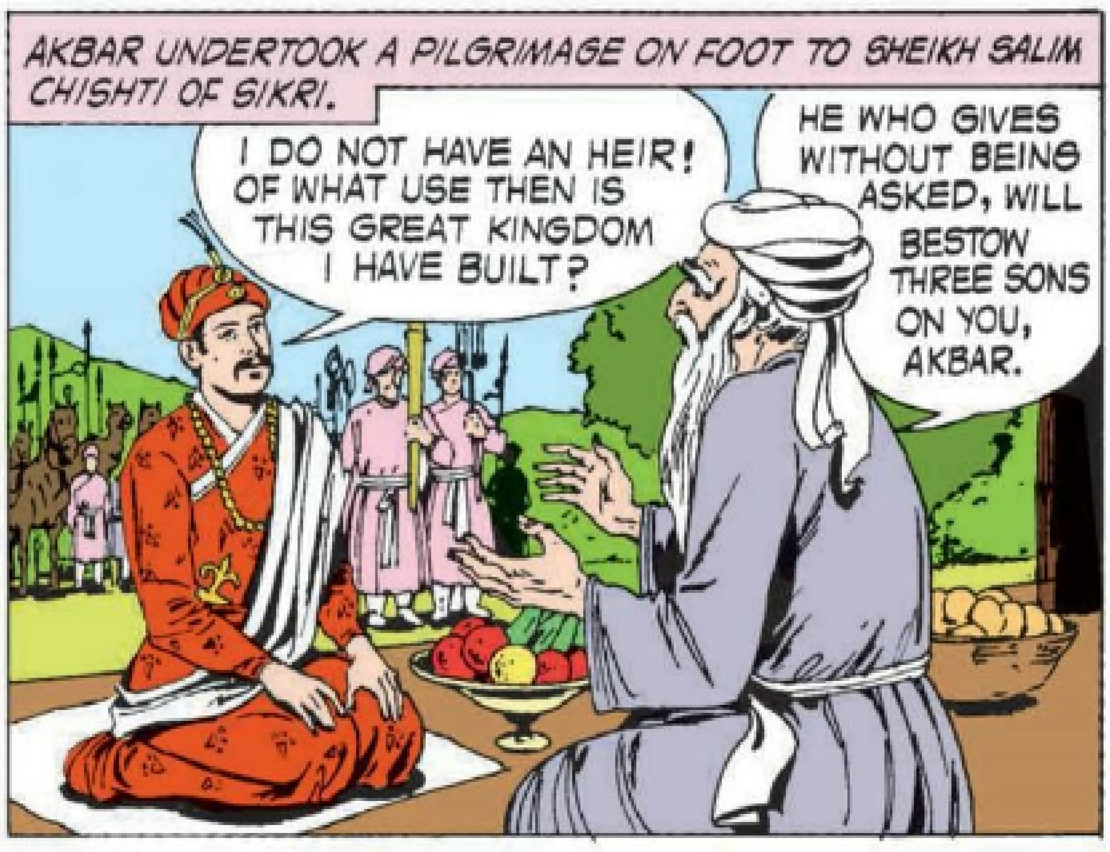
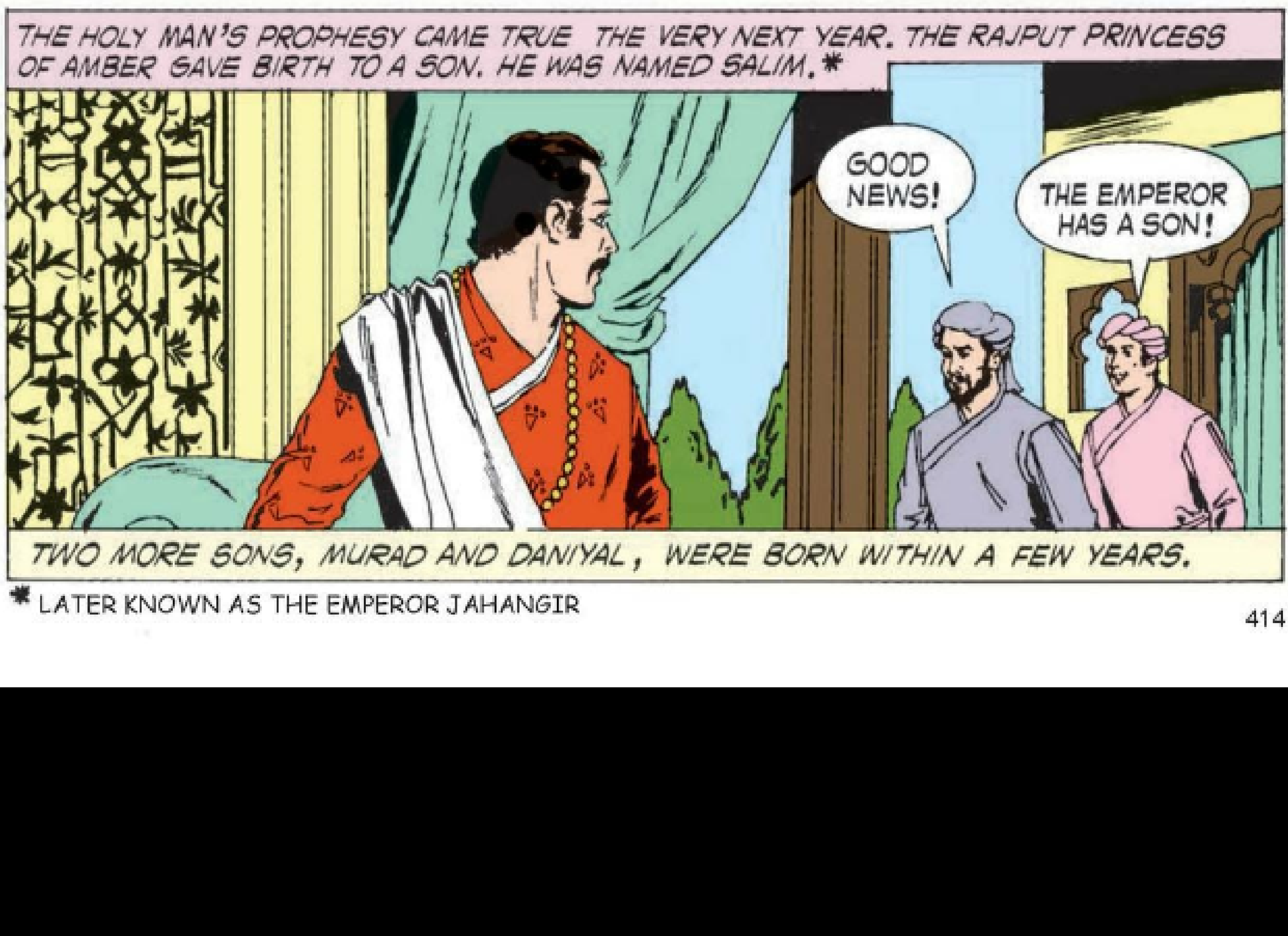
* JOINED AKBAR'S COURT SOME YEARS AFTER HIS DEFEAT AT MALWA


HAVING ESTABLISHED HIS KINGDOM ON A FIRM FOUNDATION, AKBAR COULD NOW ENJOY THE LUXURIES OF COURT LIFE. BUT A SECRET SADNESS TROUBLED HIM.
WHAT IS THE USE OF ALL THIS...? I HAVE NO SON, NO HEIR TO CONTINUE MY WORK.


I MUST SPEAK OF MY TROUBLES TO THE GOOD MAN AT SIKRI.


AKBAR UNDERTOOK A PILGRIMAGE ON FOOT TO SHEIKH SALIM CHISHTI OF SIKRI.
I DO NOT HAVE AN HEIR! OF WHAT USE THEN IS THIS GREAT KINGDOM I HAVE BUILT?
HE WHO GIVES WITHOUT BEING ASKED, WILL BESTOW THREE SONS ON YOU, AKBAR.


THE HOLY MAN'S PROPHESY CAME TRUE THE VERY NEXT YEAR. THE RAJPUT PRINCESS OF AMBER GAVE BIRTH TO A SON. HE WAS NAMED SALIM.*
GOOD NEWS!
THE EMPEROR HAS A SON!
TWO MORE SONS, MURAD AND DANIYAL, WERE BORN WITHIN A FEW YEARS.

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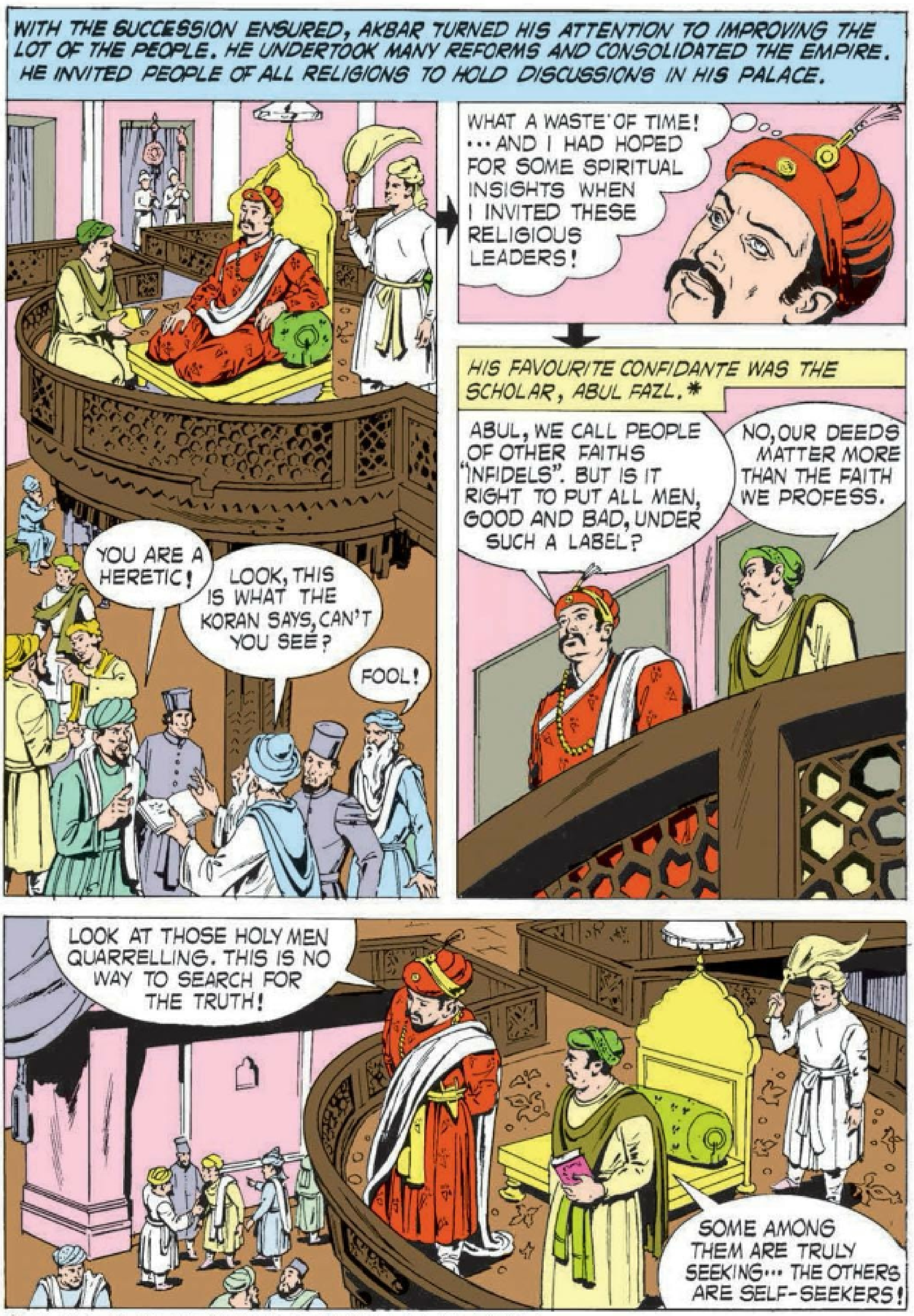
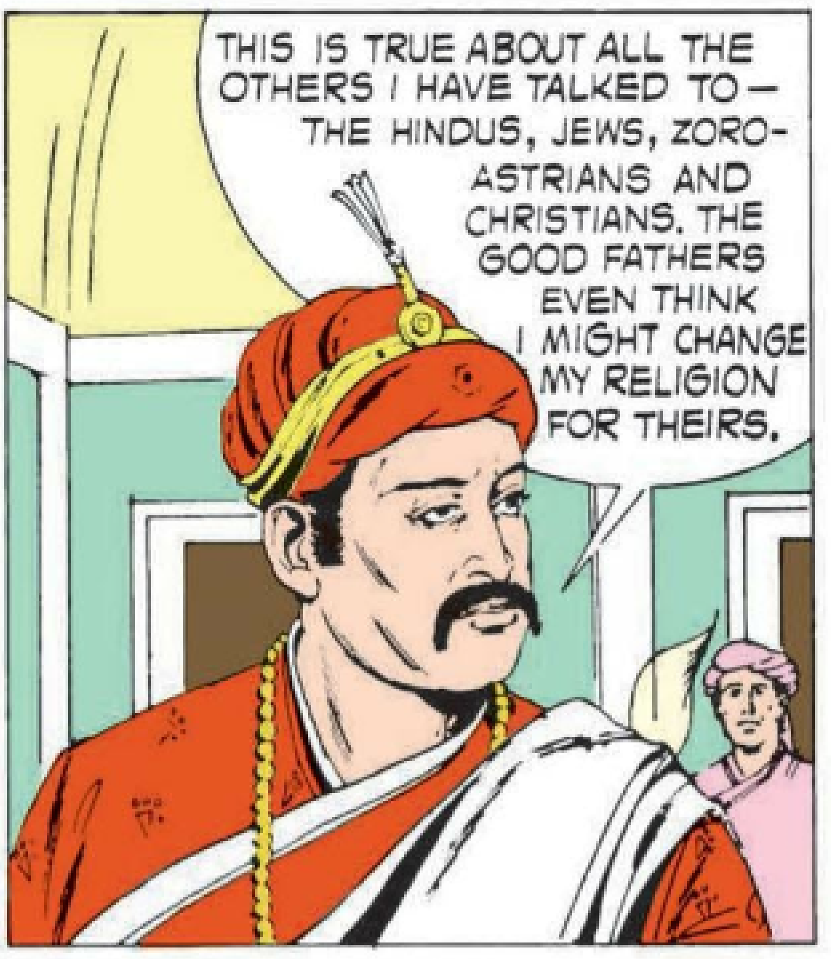
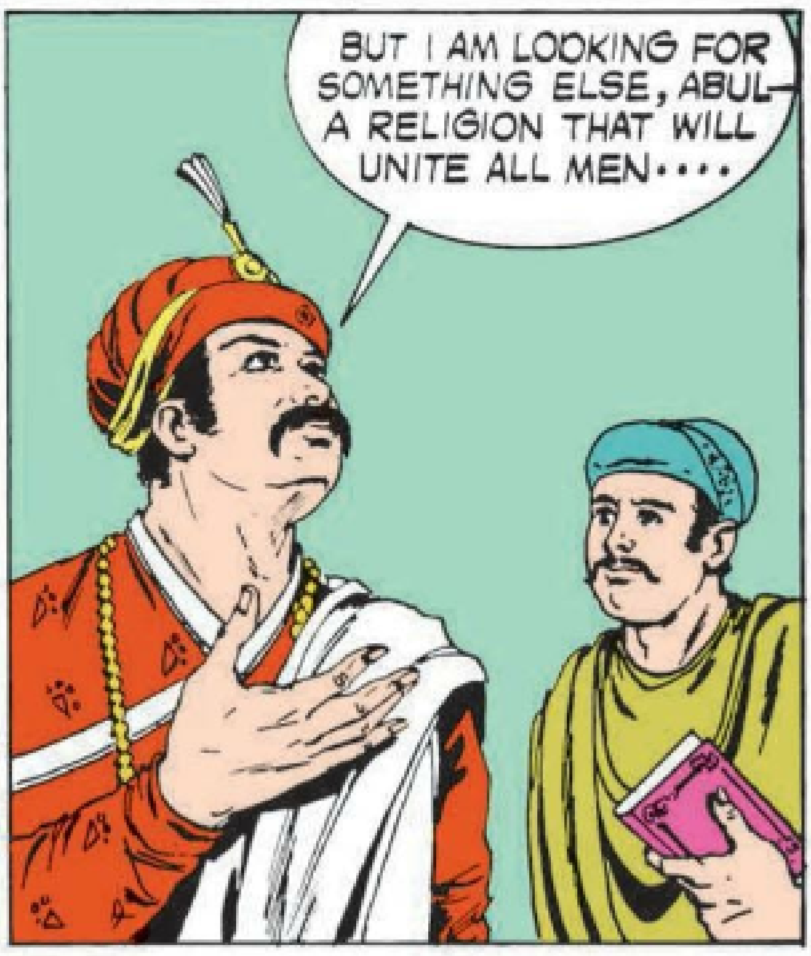
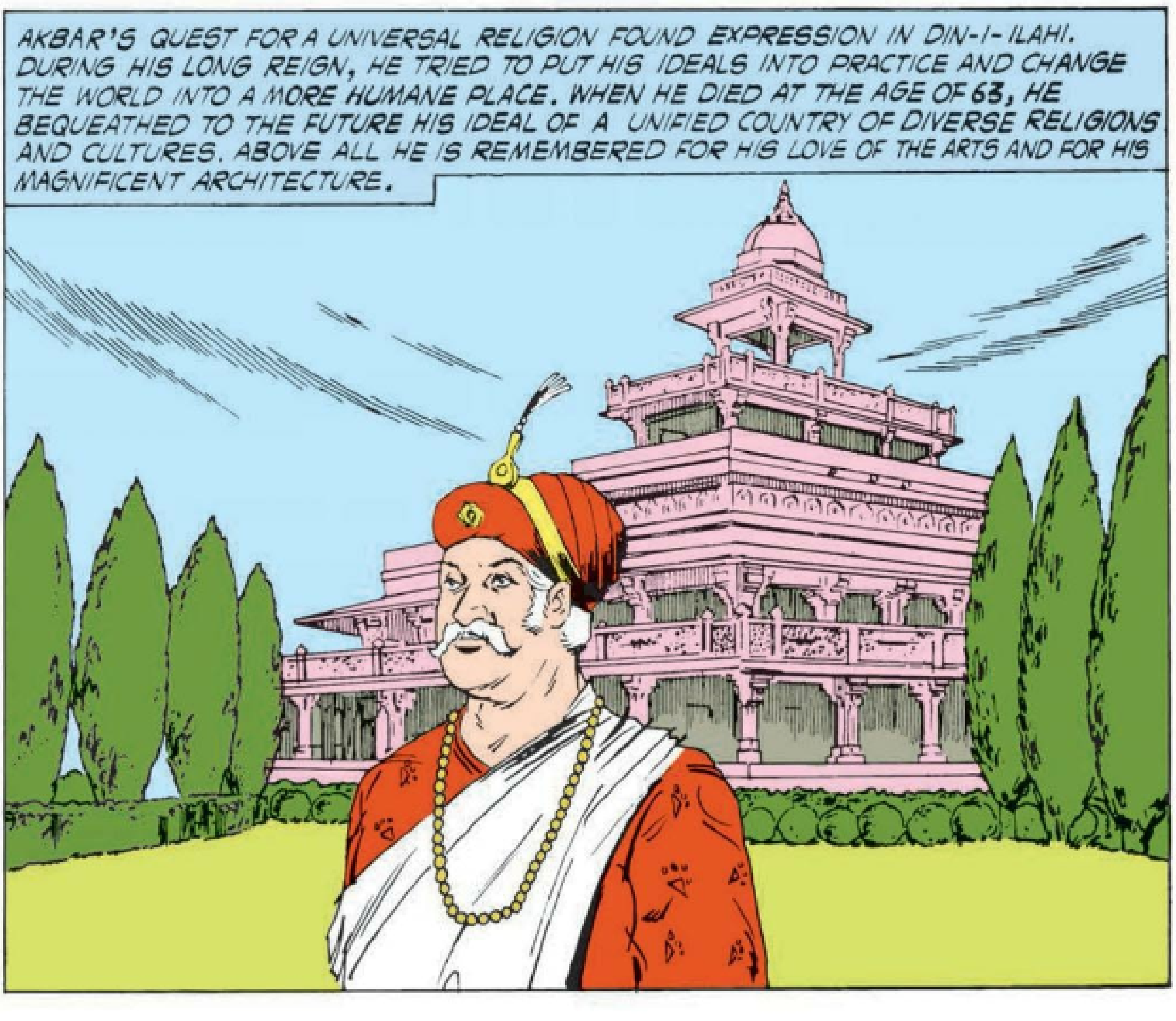
* LATER KNOWN AS THE EMPEROR JAHANGIR


WITH THE SUCCESSION ENSURED, AKBAR TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO IMPROVING THE LOT OF THE PEOPLE. HE UNDERTOOK MANY REFORMS AND CONSOLIDATED THE EMPIRE. HE INVITED PEOPLE OF ALL RELIGIONS TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS IN HIS PALACE.
YOU ARE A HERETIC!
LOOK, THIS IS WHAT THE KORAN SAYS, CAN'T YOU SEE?
FOOL!
WHAT A WASTE OF TIME! ... AND I HAD HOPED FOR SOME SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS WHEN I INVITED THESE RELIGIOUS LEADERS!
HIS FAVOURITE CONFIDANTE WAS THE SCHOLAR, ABUL FAZL.*
ABUL, WE CALL PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS "INFIDELS". BUT IS IT RIGHT TO PUT ALL MEN, GOOD AND BAD, UNDER SUCH A LABEL?
NO, OUR DEEDS MATTER MORE THAN THE FAITH WE PROFESS.
LOOK AT THOSE HOLY MEN QUARRELLING. THIS IS NO WAY TO SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH!
SOME AMONG THEM ARE TRULY SEEKING... THE OTHERS ARE SELF-SEEKERS!

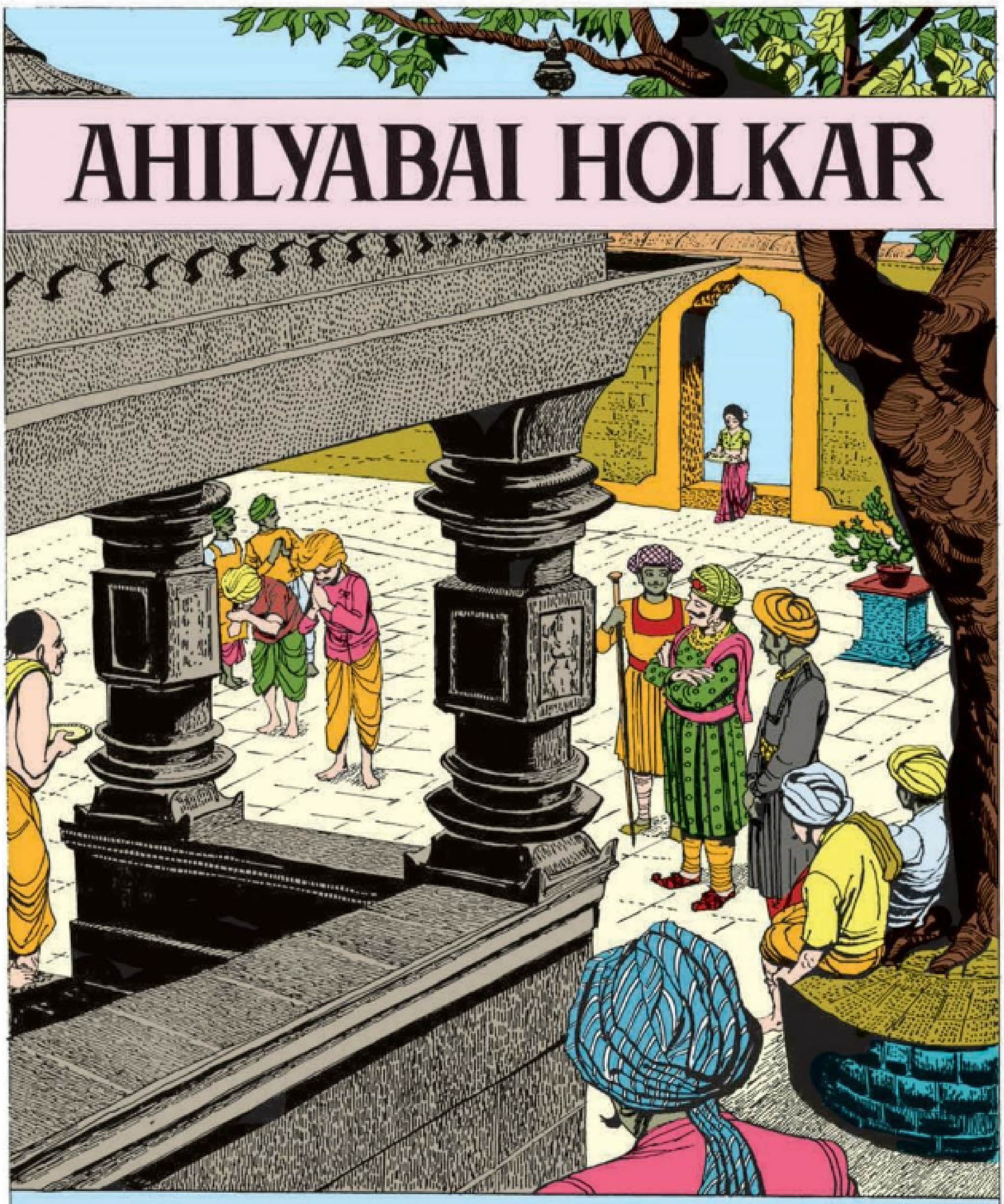
* AUTHOR OF AKBAR'S FAMOUS BIOGRAPHY, THE AKBARNAMA


THIS IS TRUE ABOUT ALL THE OTHERS I HAVE TALKED TO — THE HINDUS, JEWS, ZOROASTRIANS AND CHRISTIANS. THE GOOD FATHERS EVEN THINK I MIGHT CHANGE MY RELIGION FOR THEIRS.

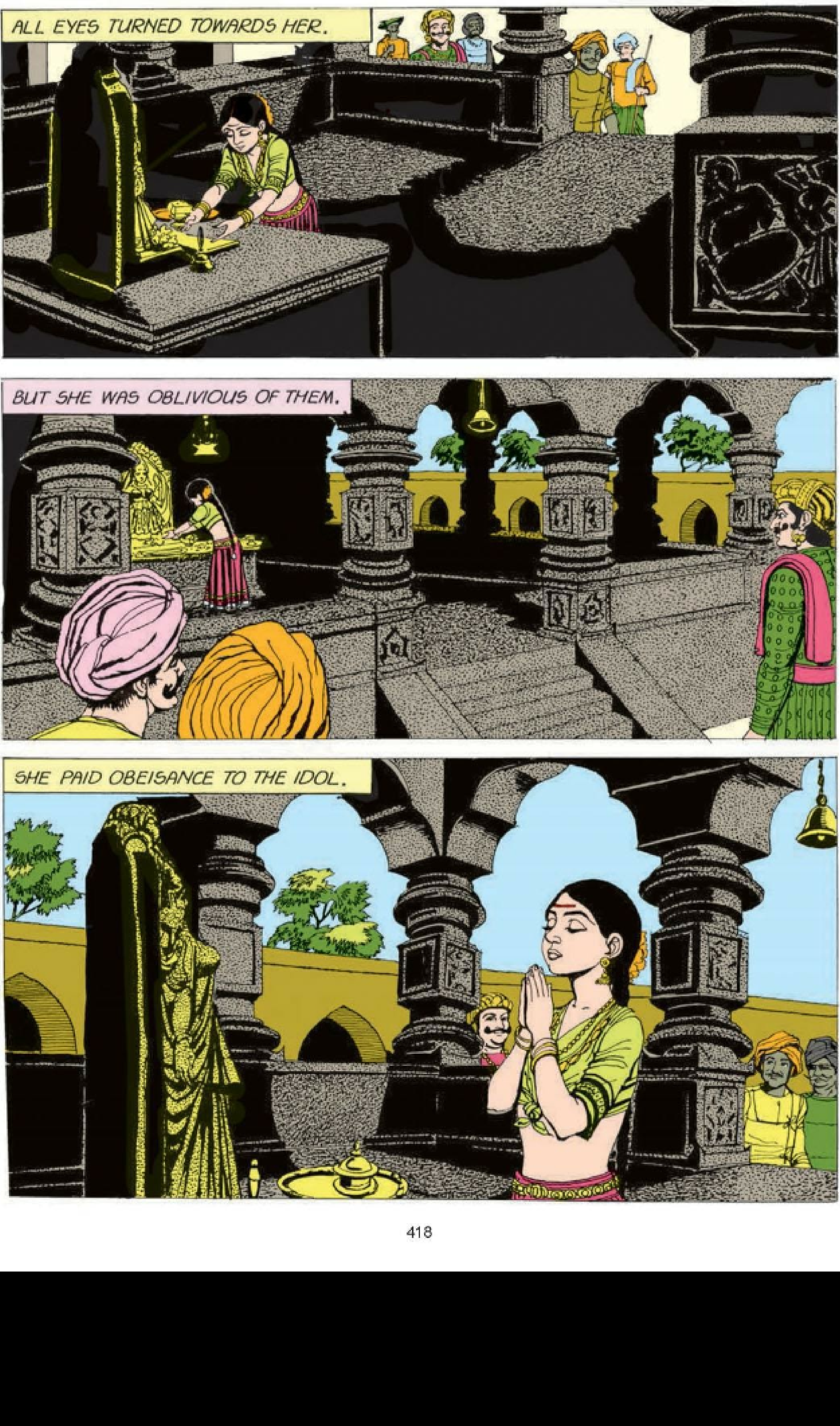

BUT I AM LOOKING FOR SOMETHING ELSE, ABUL — A RELIGION THAT WILL UNITE ALL MEN....

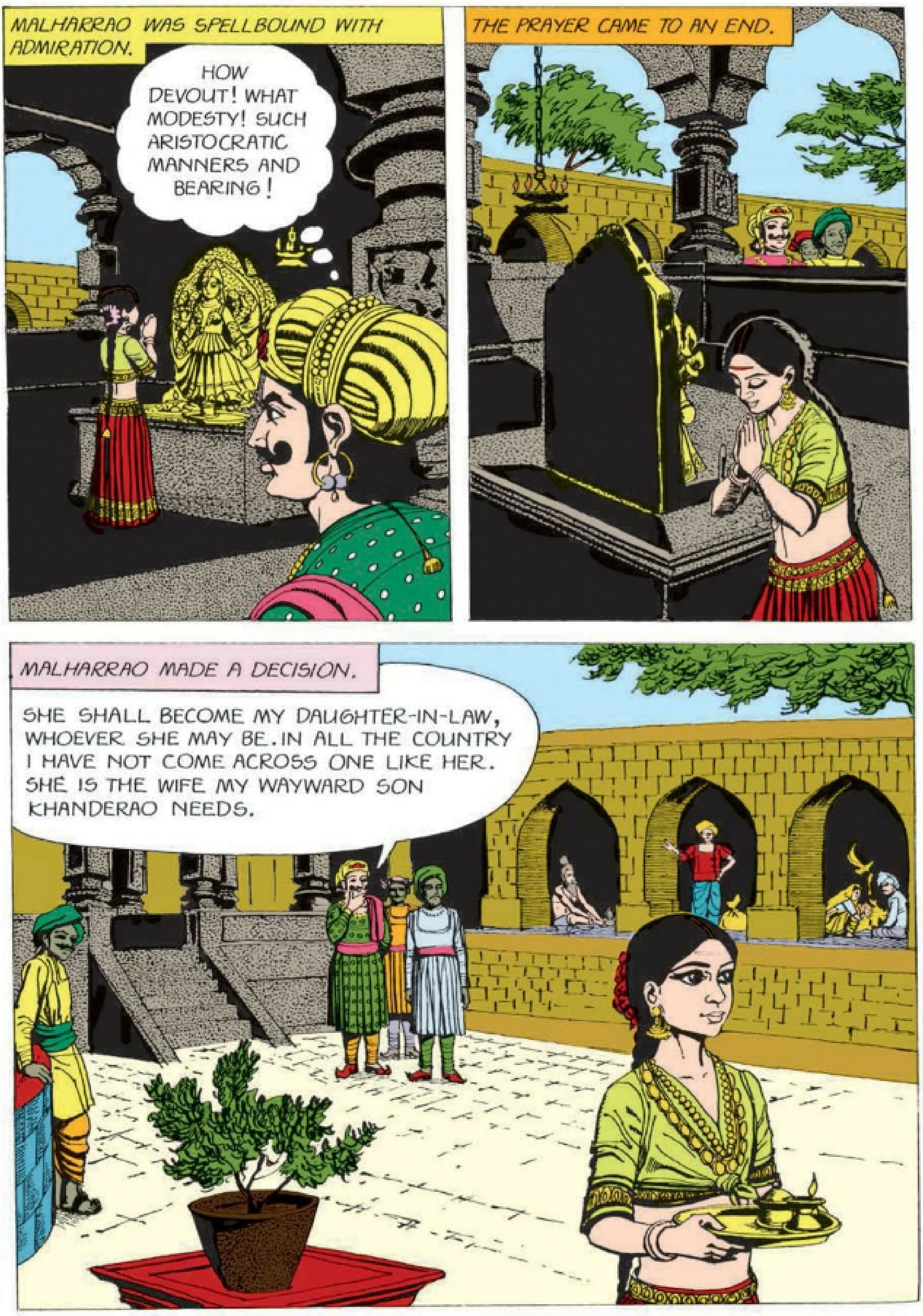

AKBAR'S QUEST FOR A UNIVERSAL RELIGION FOUND EXPRESSION IN DIN-I-ILAHI. DURING HIS LONG REIGN, HE TRIED TO PUT HIS IDEALS INTO PRACTICE AND CHANGE THE WORLD INTO A MORE HUMANE PLACE. WHEN HE DIED AT THE AGE OF 63, HE BEQUEATHED TO THE FUTURE HIS IDEAL OF A UNIFIED COUNTRY OF DIVERSE RELIGIONS AND CULTURES. ABOVE ALL HE IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS LOVE OF THE ARTS AND FOR HIS MAGNIFICENT ARCHITECTURE.

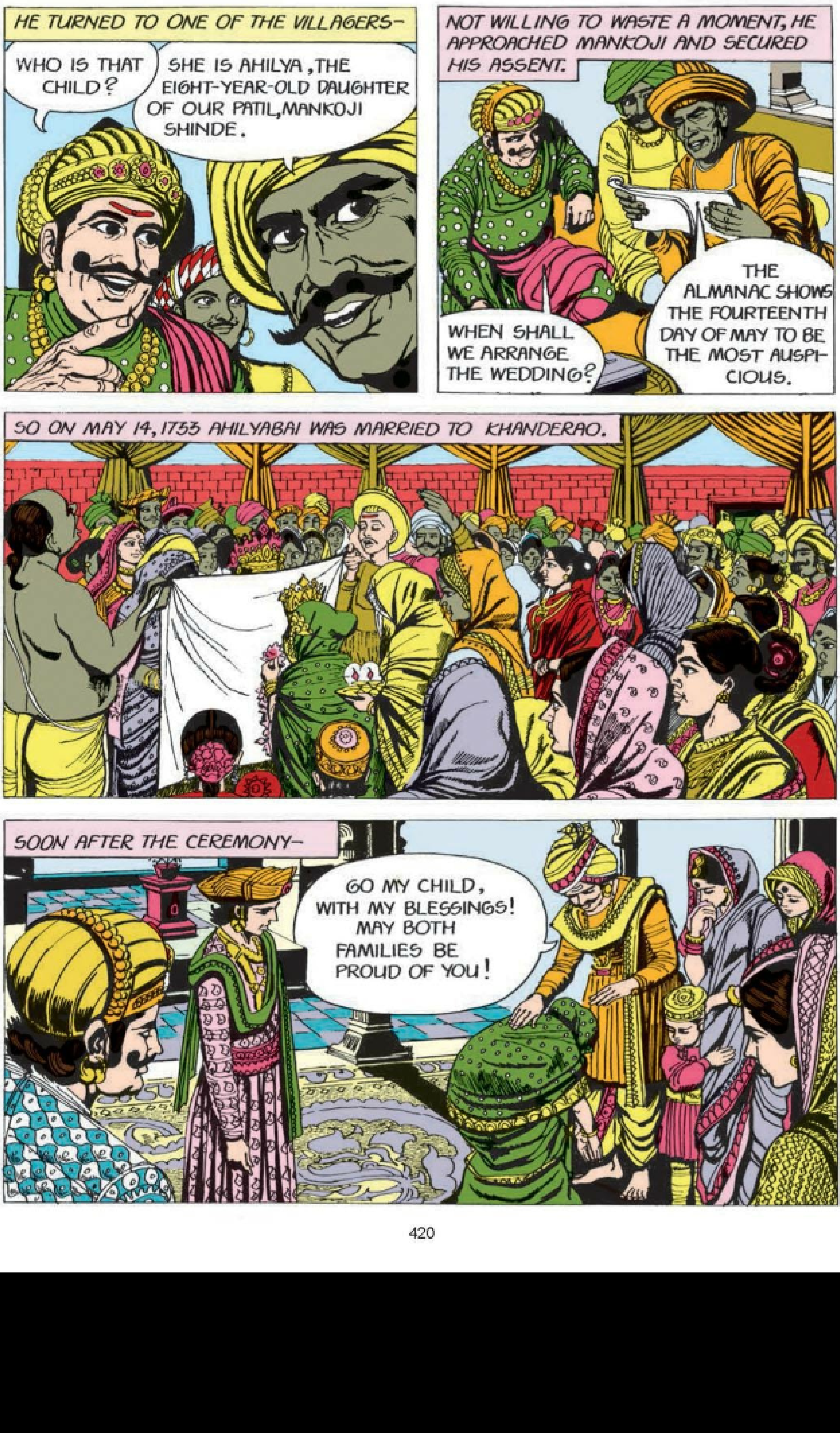
AHILYABAI HOLKAR

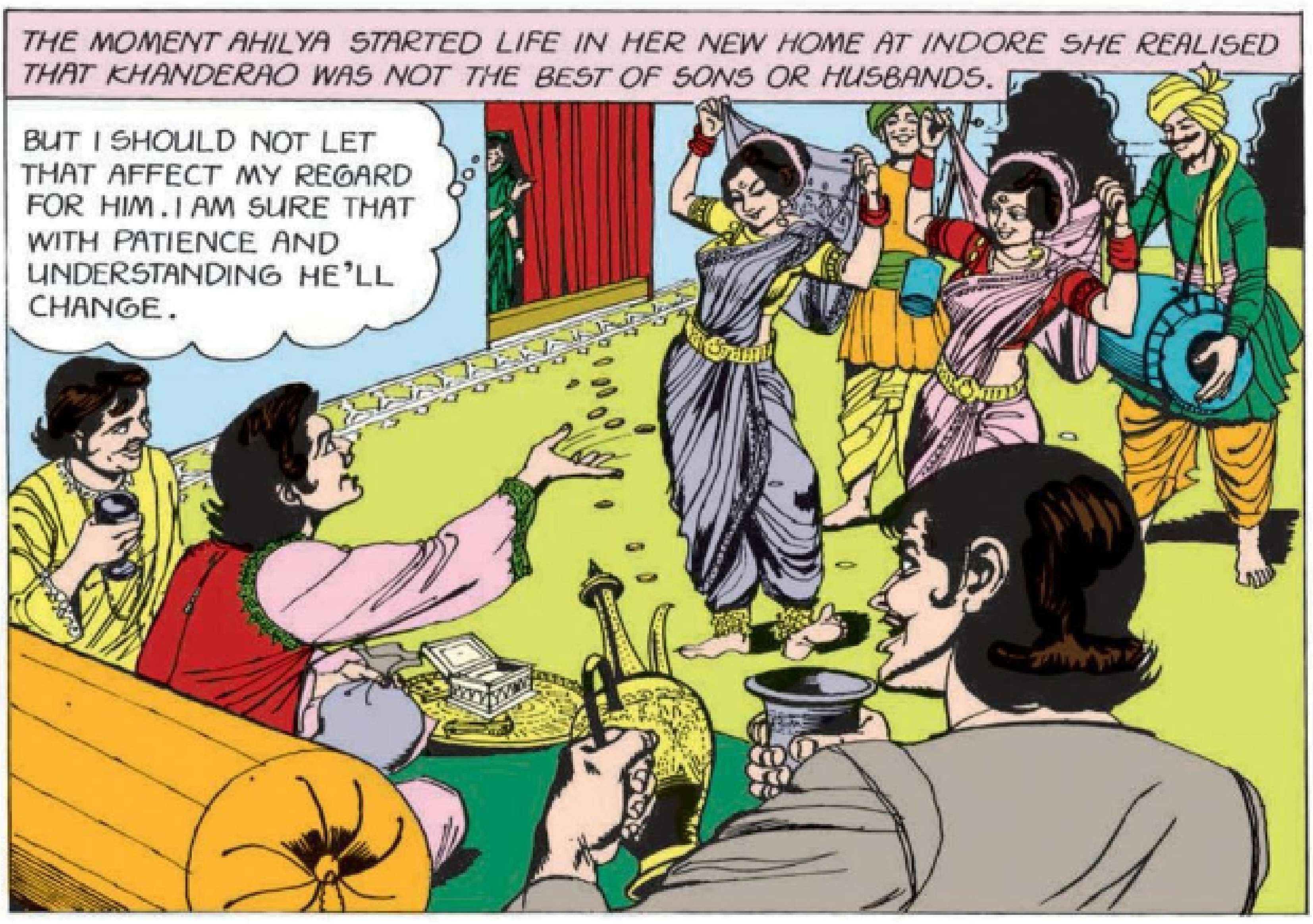


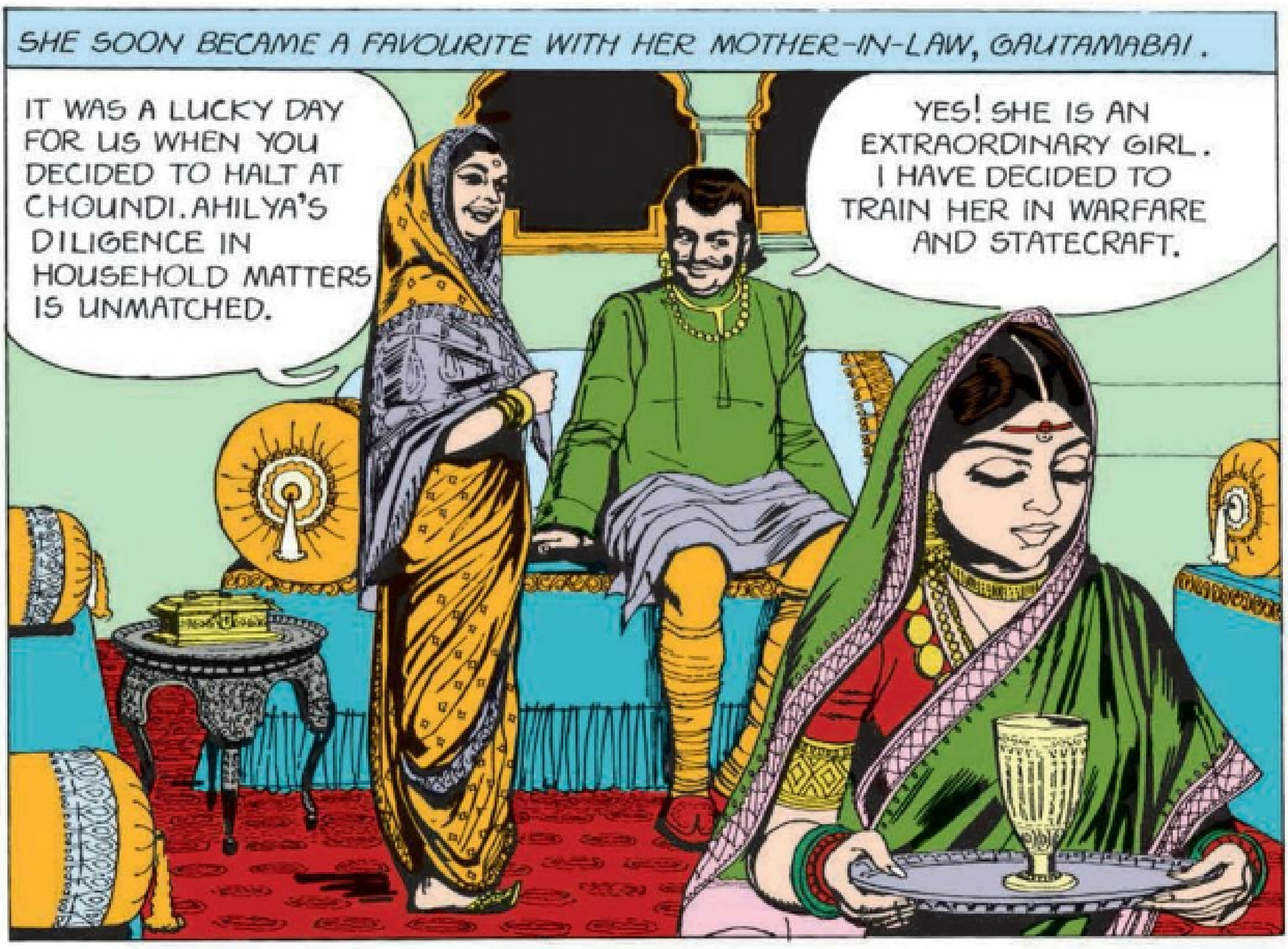
IT WAS THE YEAR 1733 A.D. MALHARRAO HOLKAR AND HIS MEN WERE ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM A TOUR OF THE COUNTRY. THEY DECIDED TO HALT FOR THE NIGHT AT A TEMPLE IN CHOUNDI VILLAGE NEAR AURANGABAD. AS THEY STOOD IN THE COURTYARD WITH THE VILLAGERS WHO HAD GATHERED FOR THE EVENING PRAYERS, A LITTLE GIRL ENTERED.

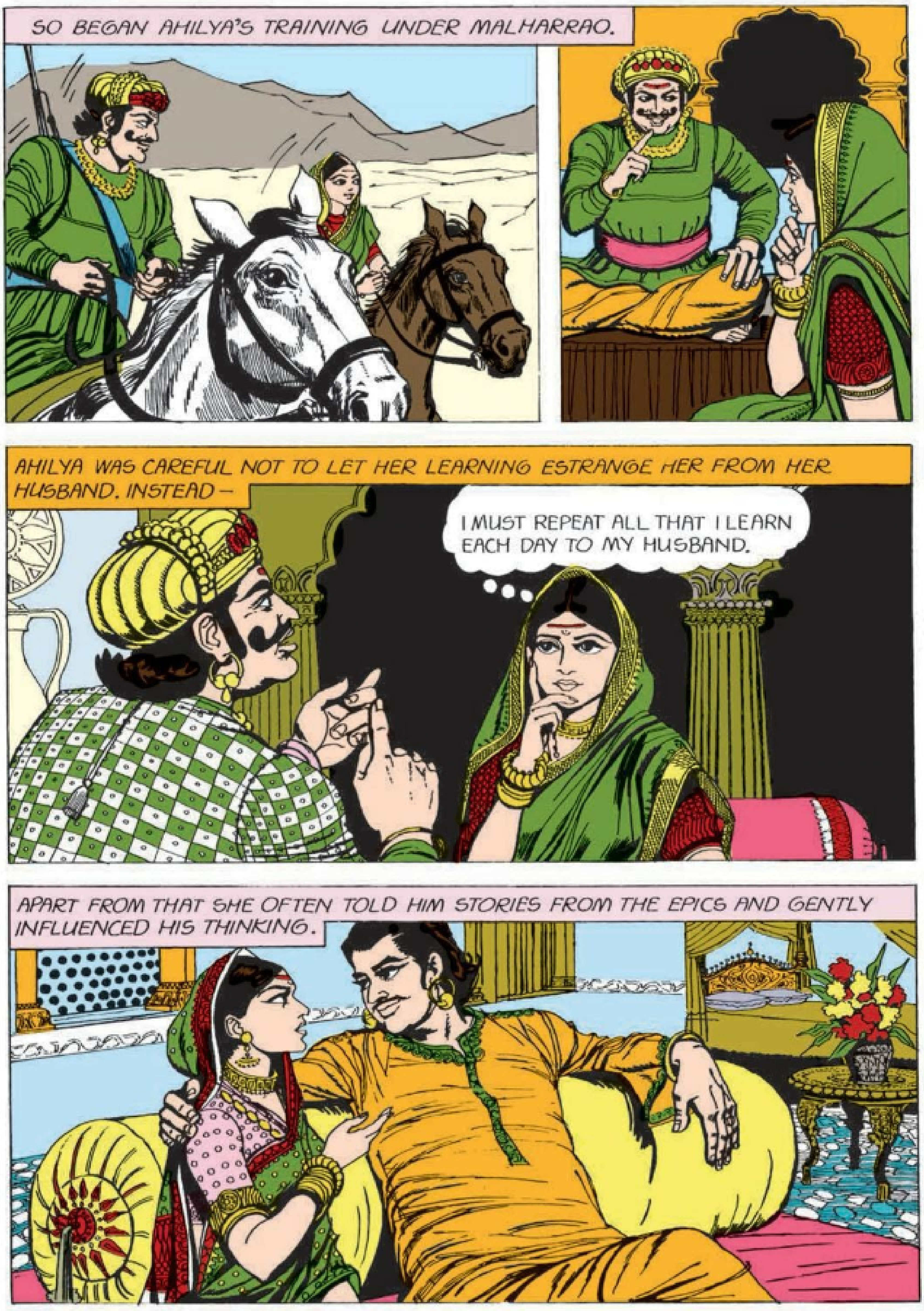

ALL EYES TURNED TOWARDS HER.
BUT SHE WAS OBLIVIOUS OF THEM.
SHE PAID OBEISANCE TO THE IDOL.

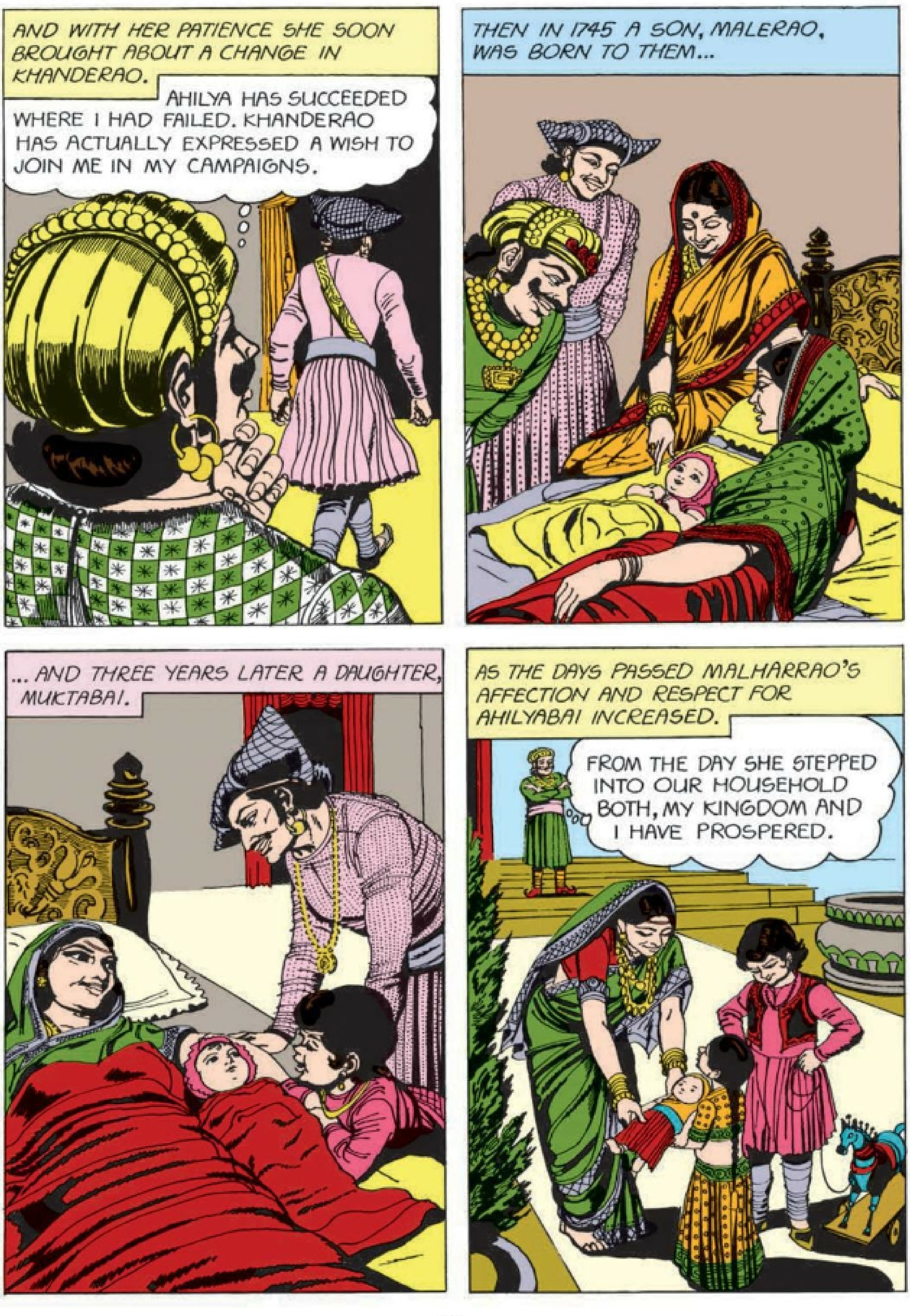

MALHARRAO WAS SPELLBOUND WITH ADMIRATION.
HOW DEVOUT! WHAT MODESTY! SUCH ARISTOCRATIC MANNERS AND BEARING!
THE PRAYER CAME TO AN END.
MALHARRAO MADE A DECISION.
SHE SHALL BECOME MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, WHOEVER SHE MAY BE. IN ALL THE COUNTRY I HAVE NOT COME ACROSS ONE LIKE HER. SHE IS THE WIFE MY WAYWARD SON KHANDERAO NEEDS.


HE TURNED TO ONE OF THE VILLAGERS–
WHO IS THAT CHILD?
SHE IS AHILYA, THE EIGHT-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF OUR PATIL, MANKOJI SHINDE.
NOT WILLING TO WASTE A MOMENT, HE APPROACHED MANKOJI AND SECURED HIS ASSENT.
WHEN SHALL WE ARRANGE THE WEDDING?
THE ALMANAC SHOWS THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF MAY TO BE THE MOST AUSPICIOUS.
SO ON MAY 14, 1733 AHILYABAI WAS MARRIED TO KHANDERAO.
SOON AFTER THE CEREMONY–
GO MY CHILD, WITH MY BLESSINGS! MAY BOTH FAMILIES BE PROUD OF YOU!

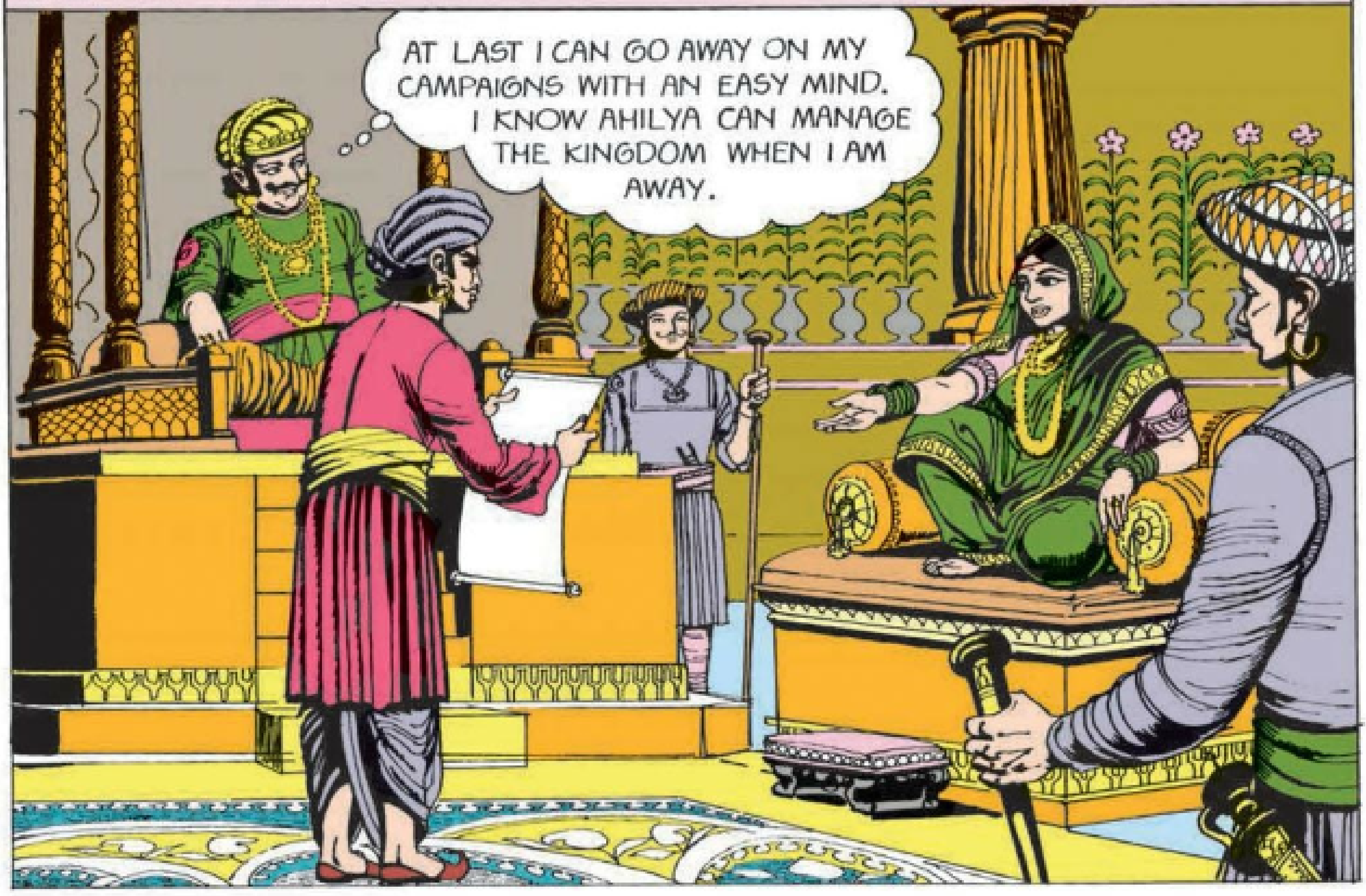

THE MOMENT AHILYA STARTED LIFE IN HER NEW HOME AT INDORE SHE REALISED THAT KHANDERAO WAS NOT THE BEST OF SONS OR HUSBANDS.
BUT I SHOULD NOT LET THAT AFFECT MY REGARD FOR HIM. I AM SURE THAT WITH PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING HE'LL CHANGE.


SHE SOON BECAME A FAVOURITE WITH HER MOTHER-IN-LAW, GAUTAMABAI.
IT WAS A LUCKY DAY FOR US WHEN YOU DECIDED TO HALT AT CHOUNDI. AHILYA'S DILIGENCE IN HOUSEHOLD MATTERS IS UNMATCHED.
YES! SHE IS AN EXTRAORDINARY GIRL. I HAVE DECIDED TO TRAIN HER IN WARFARE AND STATECRAFT.

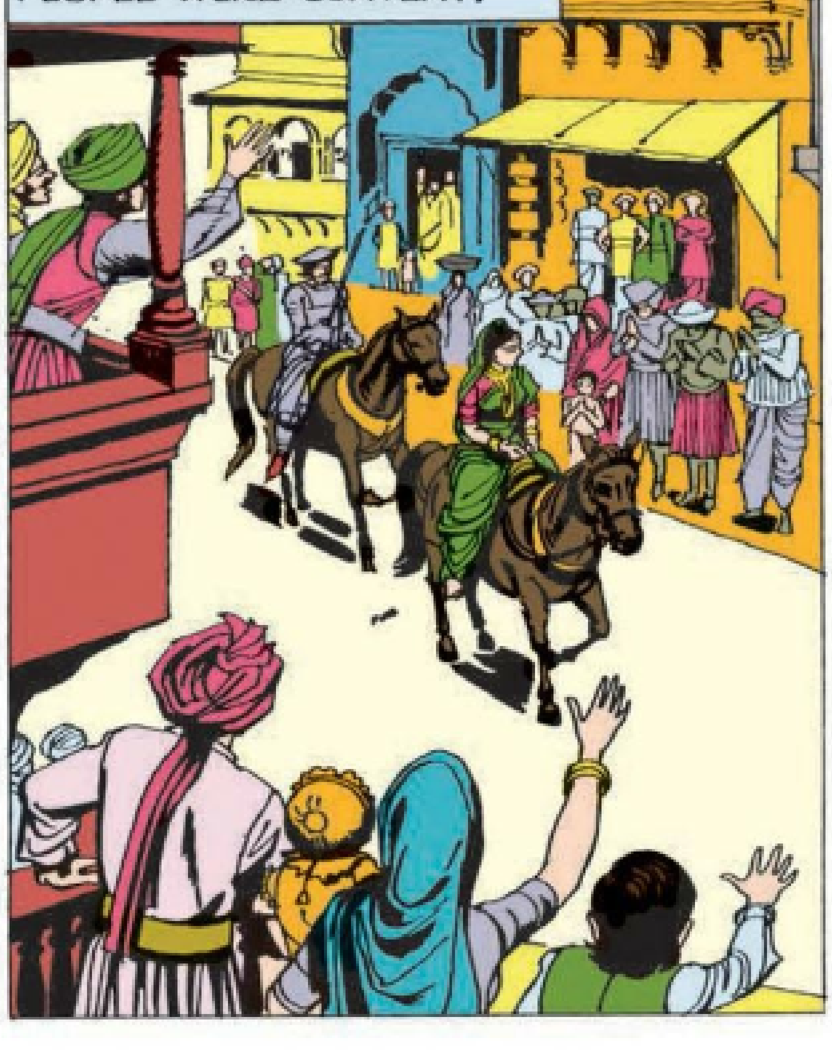

SO BEGAN AHILYA'S TRAINING UNDER MALHARRAO.
AHILYA WAS CAREFUL NOT TO LET HER LEARNING ESTRANGE HER FROM HER HUSBAND. INSTEAD —
I MUST REPEAT ALL THAT I LEARN EACH DAY TO MY HUSBAND.
APART FROM THAT SHE OFTEN TOLD HIM STORIES FROM THE EPICS AND GENTLY INFLUENCED HIS THINKING.


AND WITH HER PATIENCE SHE SOON BROUGHT ABOUT A CHANGE IN KHANDERAO.
AHILYA HAS SUCCEEDED WHERE I HAD FAILED. KHANDERAO HAS ACTUALLY EXPRESSED A WISH TO JOIN ME IN MY CAMPAIGNS.
THEN IN 1745 A SON, MALERAO, WAS BORN TO THEM...
... AND THREE YEARS LATER A DAUGHTER, MUKTABAI.
AS THE DAYS PASSED MALHARRAO'S AFFECTION AND RESPECT FOR AHILYABAI INCREASED.
FROM THE DAY SHE STEPPED INTO OUR HOUSEHOLD BOTH, MY KINGDOM AND I HAVE PROSPERED.

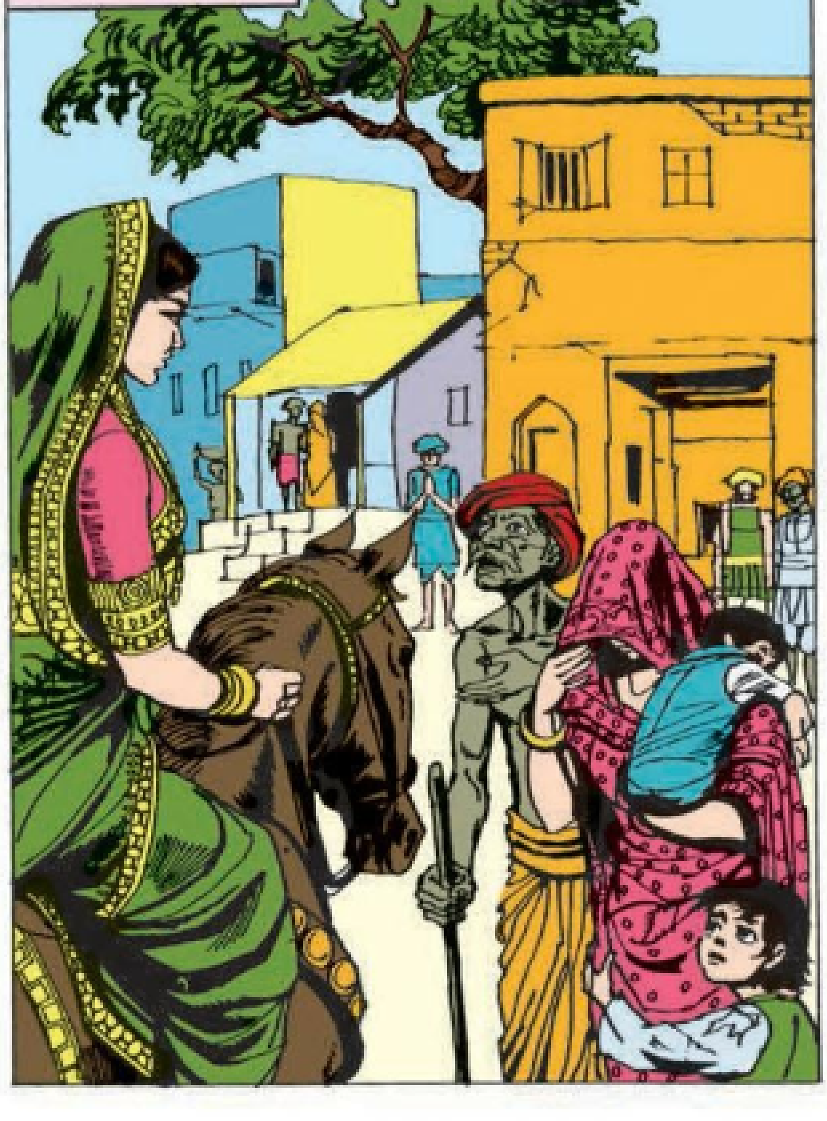
AHILYA HAD BEEN QUICK TO ABSORB ALL THAT MALHARRAO TAUGHT HER.

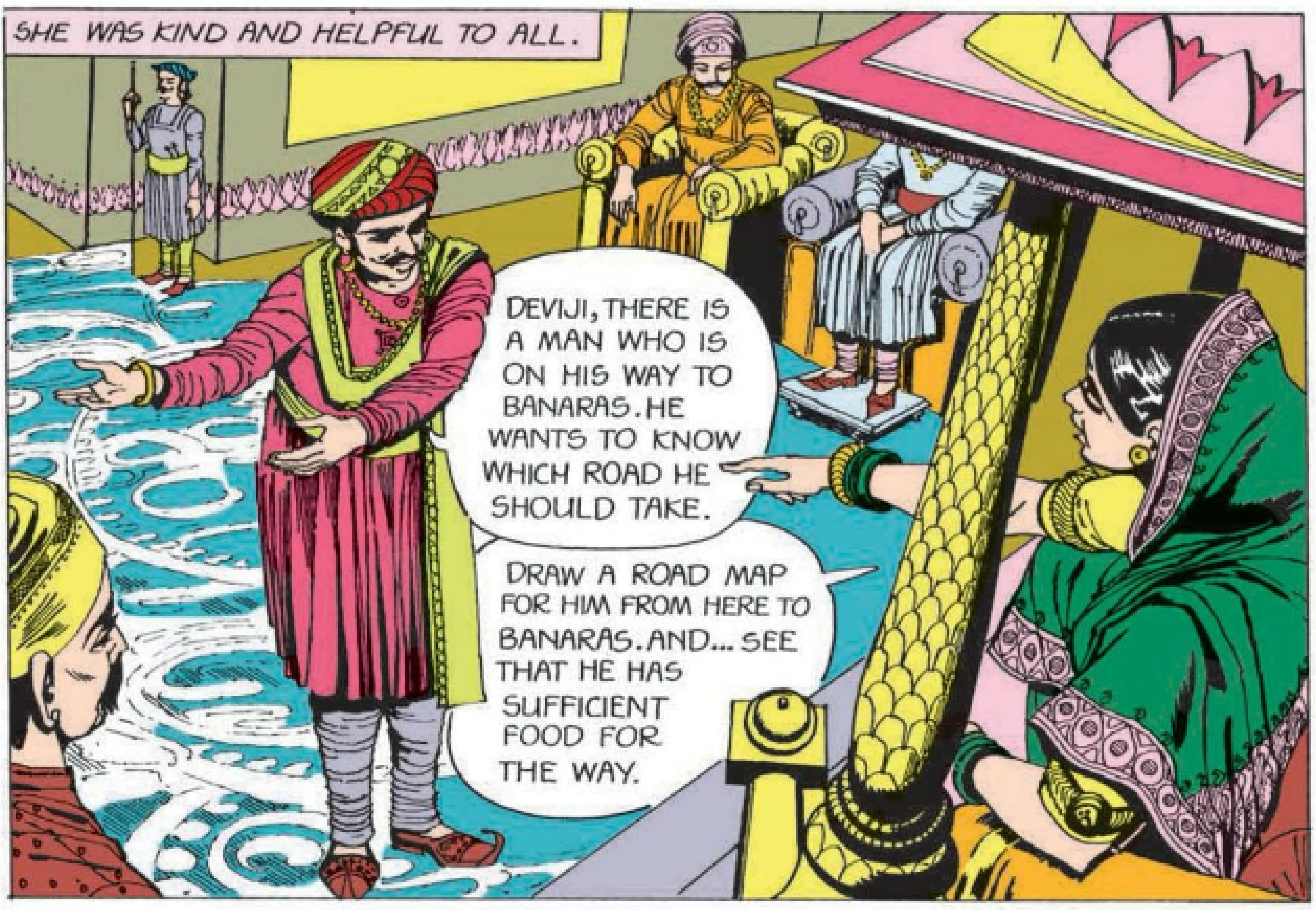

AT LAST I CAN GO AWAY ON MY CAMPAIGNS WITH AN EASY MIND. I KNOW AHILYA CAN MANAGE THE KINGDOM WHEN I AM AWAY.

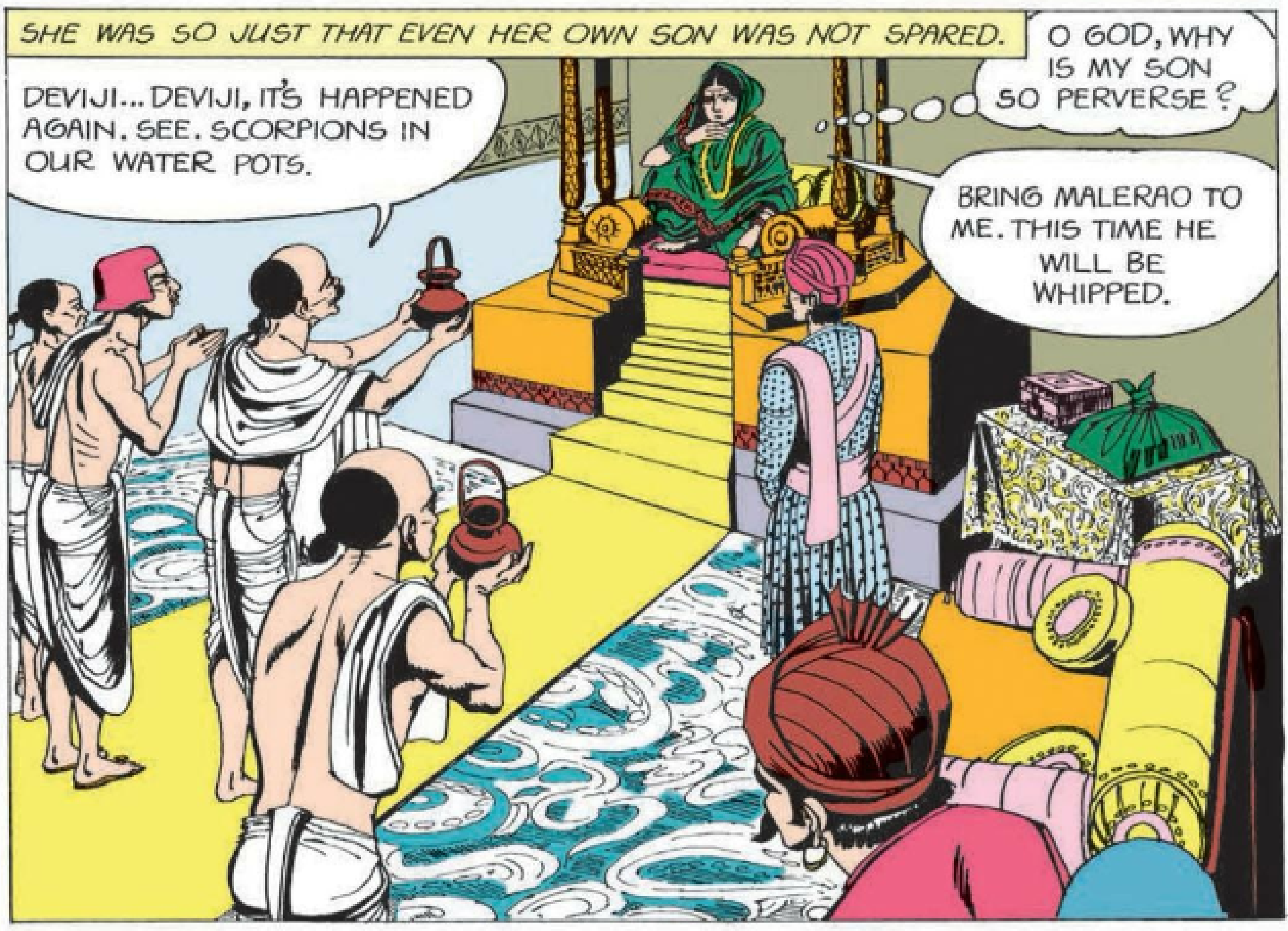
WHEN MALHARRAO WAS AWAY AHILYA RULED THE KINGDOM FOR HIM. SHE TOURED THE CITY TO SEE THAT THE PEOPLE WERE CONTENT.

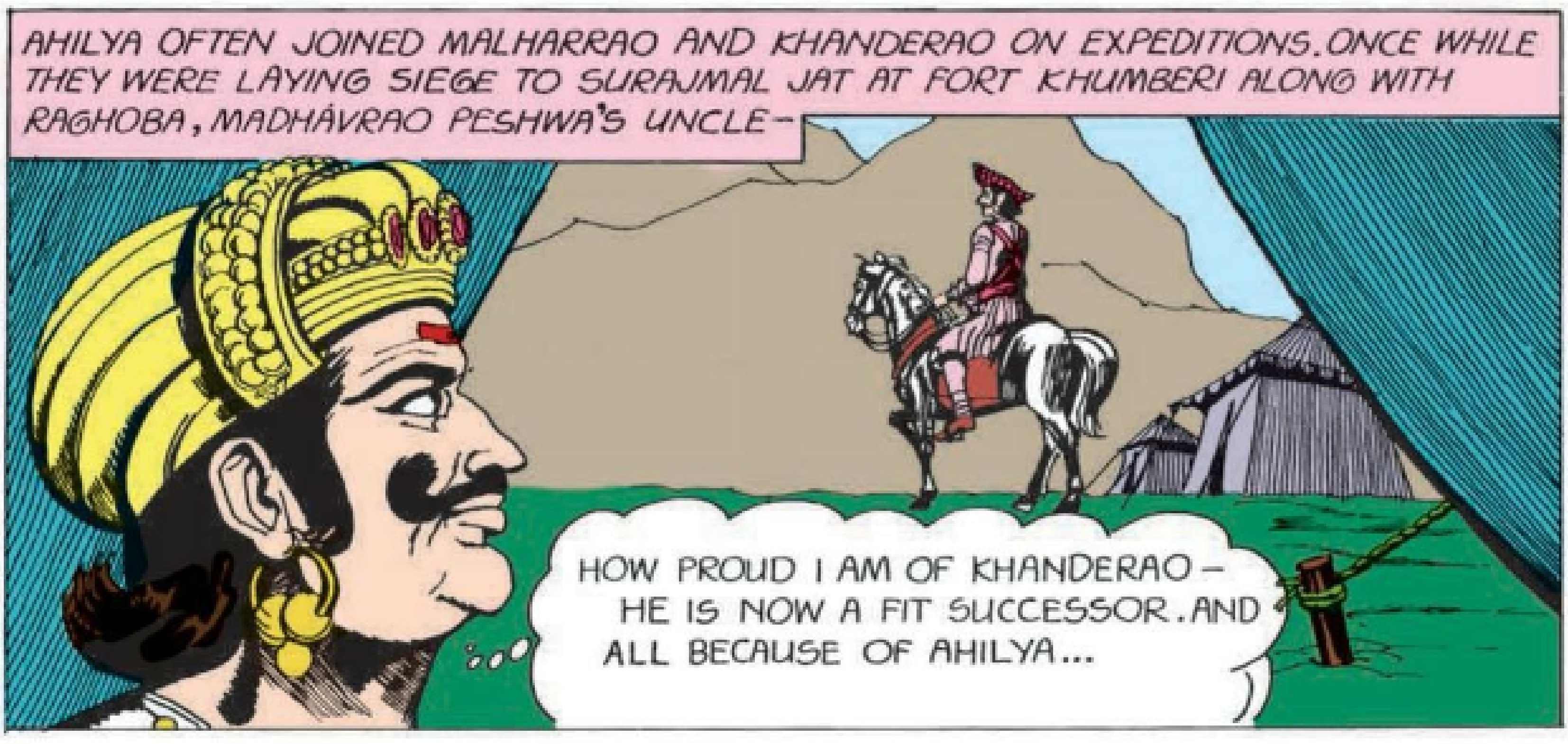


SHE GAVE EAR TO THE LEAST OF COMPLAINTS.



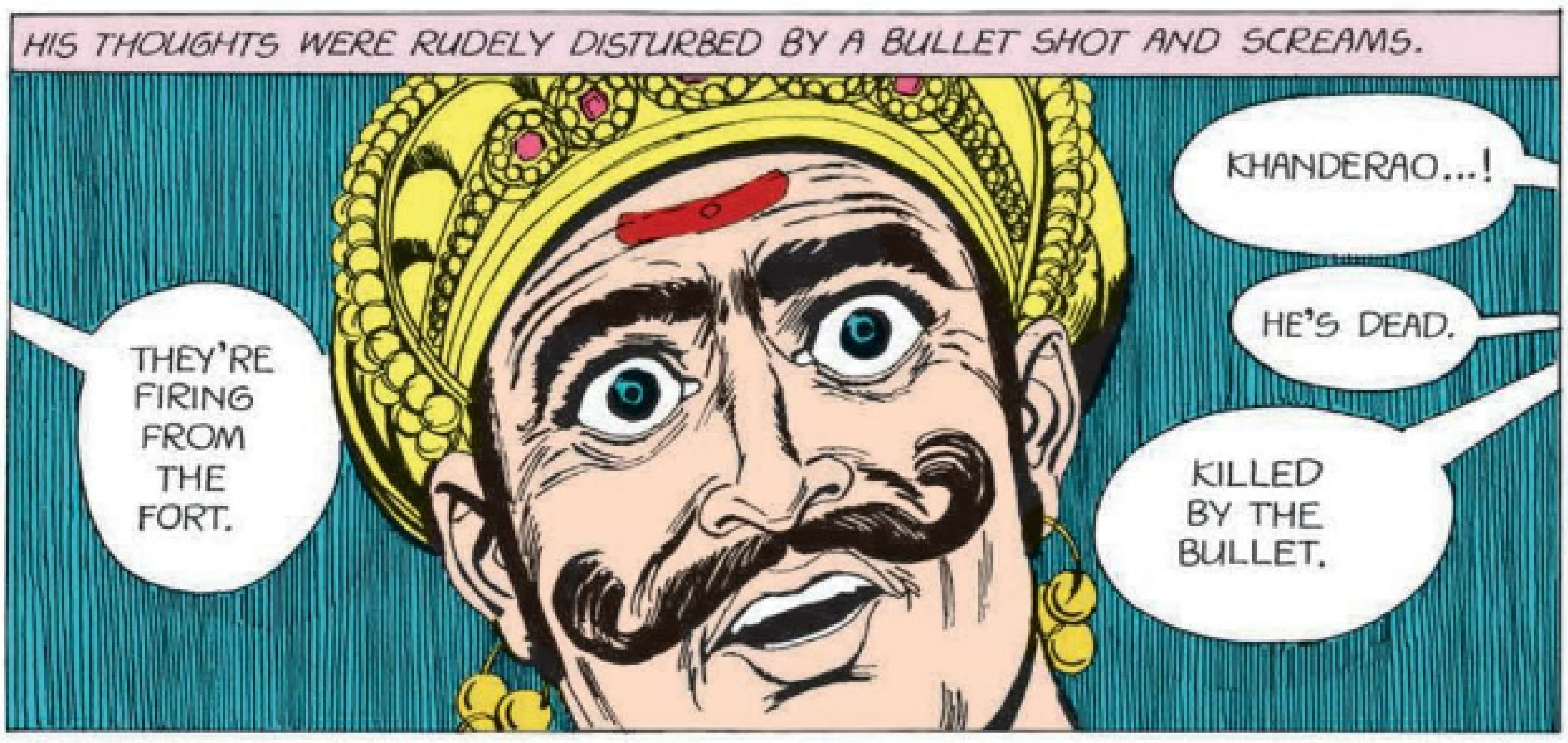

SHE WAS KIND AND HELPFUL TO ALL.
DEVIJI, THERE IS A MAN WHO IS ON HIS WAY TO BANARAS. HE WANTS TO KNOW WHICH ROAD HE SHOULD TAKE.
DRAW A ROAD MAP FOR HIM FROM HERE TO BANARAS. AND... SEE THAT HE HAS SUFFICIENT FOOD FOR THE WAY.


SHE WAS SO JUST THAT EVEN HER OWN SON WAS NOT SPARED.
DEVIJI... DEVIJI, IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN. SEE. SCORPIONS IN OUR WATER POTS.
O GOD, WHY IS MY SON SO PERVERSE?
BRING MALERAO TO ME. THIS TIME HE WILL BE WHIPPED.



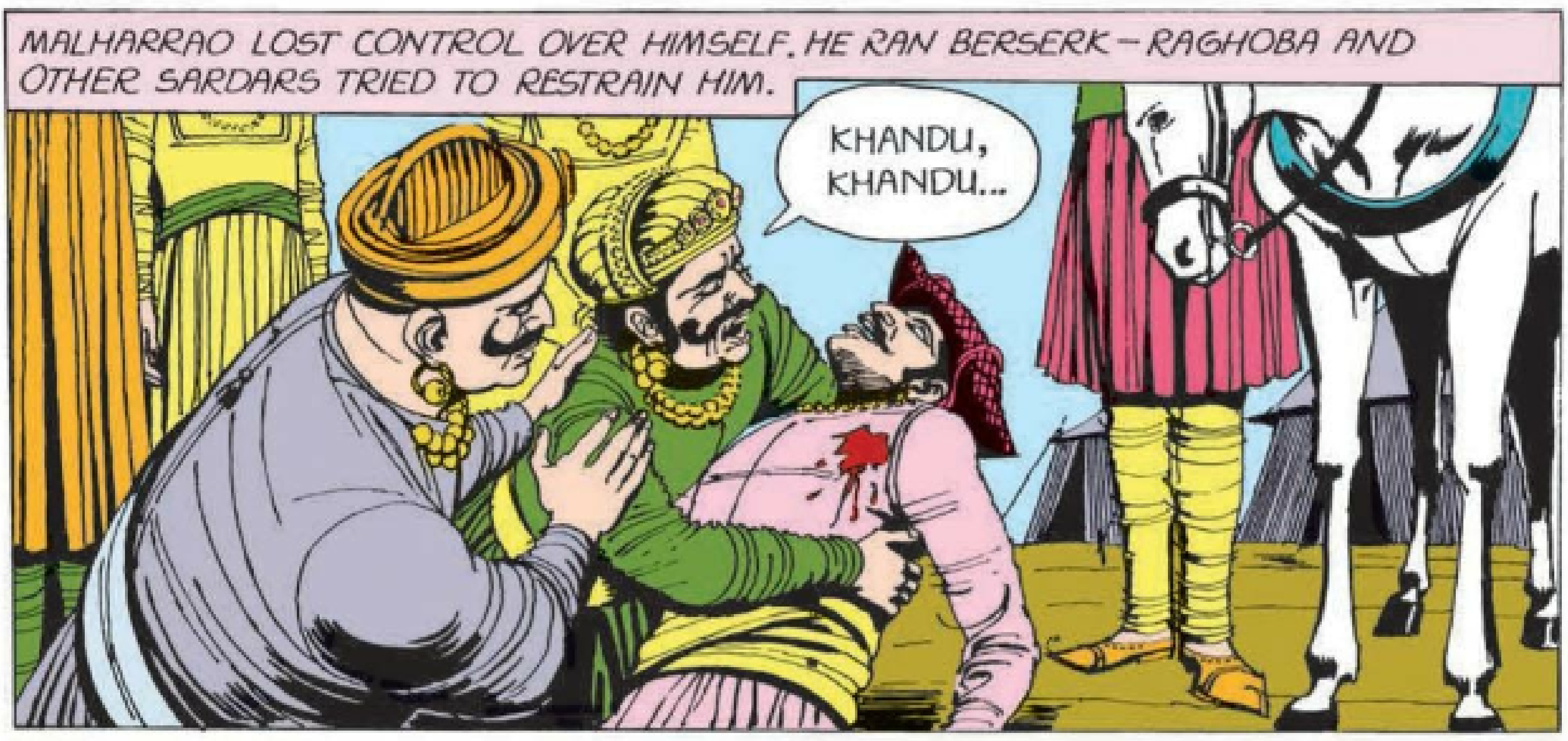
AHILYA OFTEN JOINED MALHARRAO AND KHANDERAO ON EXPEDITIONS. ONCE WHILE THEY WERE LAYING SIEGE TO SURAJMAL JAT AT FORT KHUMBERI ALONG WITH RAGHOBA, MADHAVRAO PESHWA'S UNCLE–

HOW PROUD I AM OF KHANDERAO – HE IS NOW A FIT SUCCESSOR. AND ALL BECAUSE OF AHILYA...



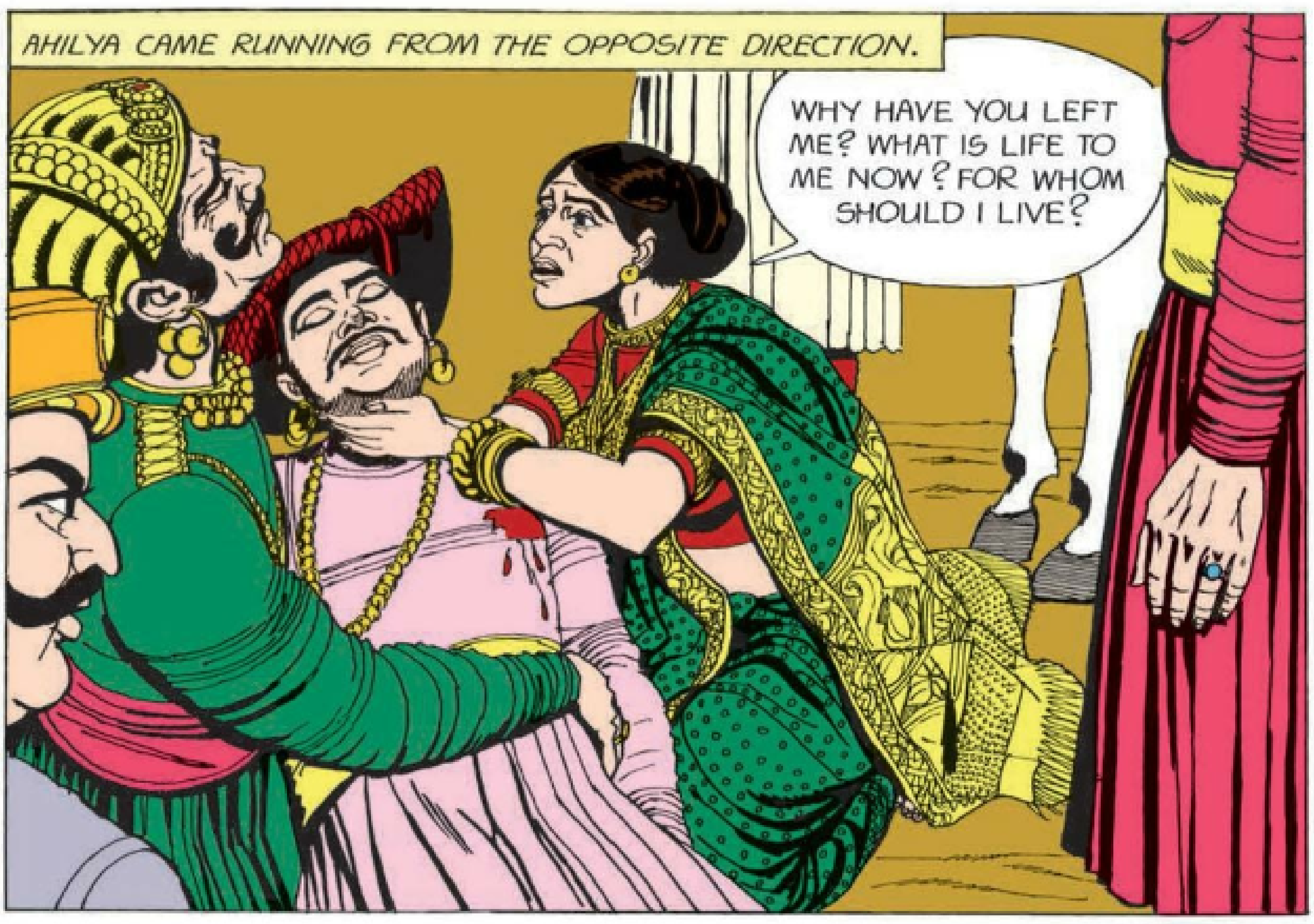
HIS THOUGHTS WERE RUDELY DISTURBED BY A BULLET SHOT AND SCREAMS.

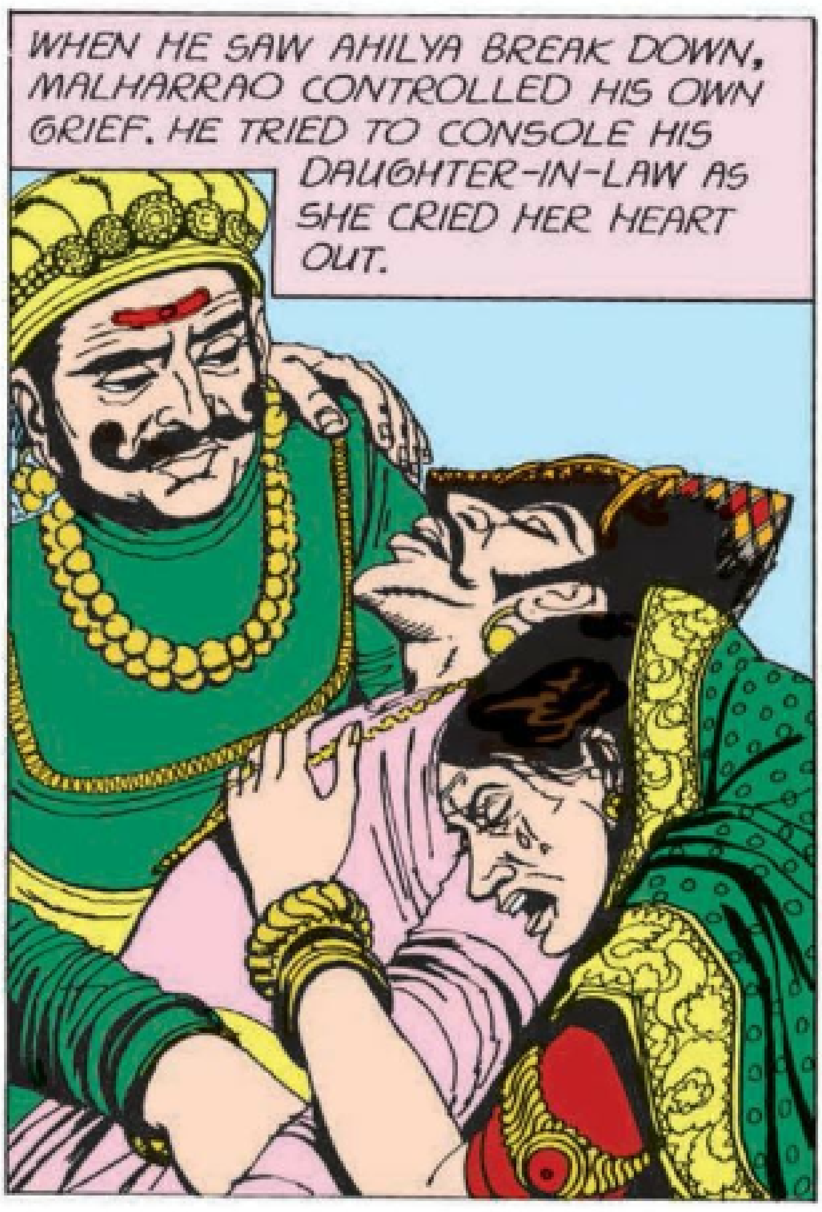
THEY'RE FIRING FROM THE FORT.
KHANDERAO...!
HE'S DEAD.
KILLED BY THE BULLET.

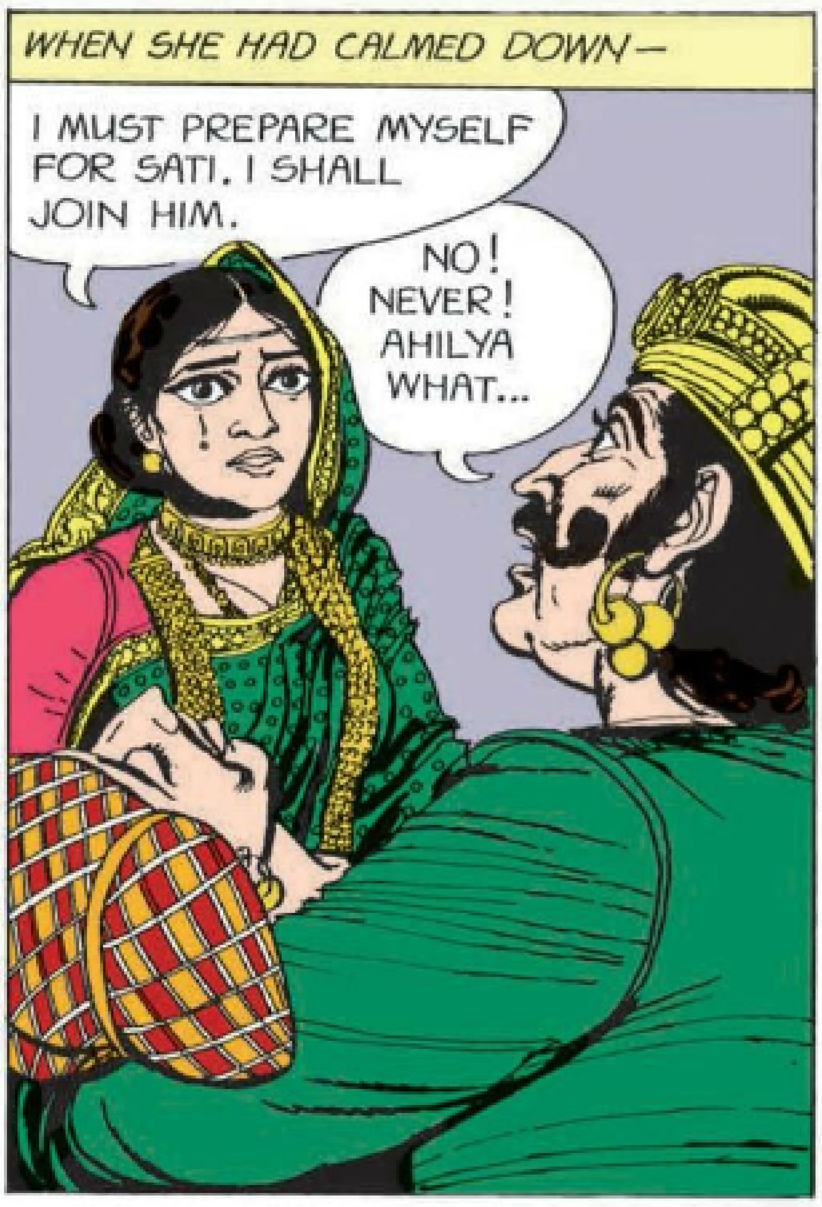


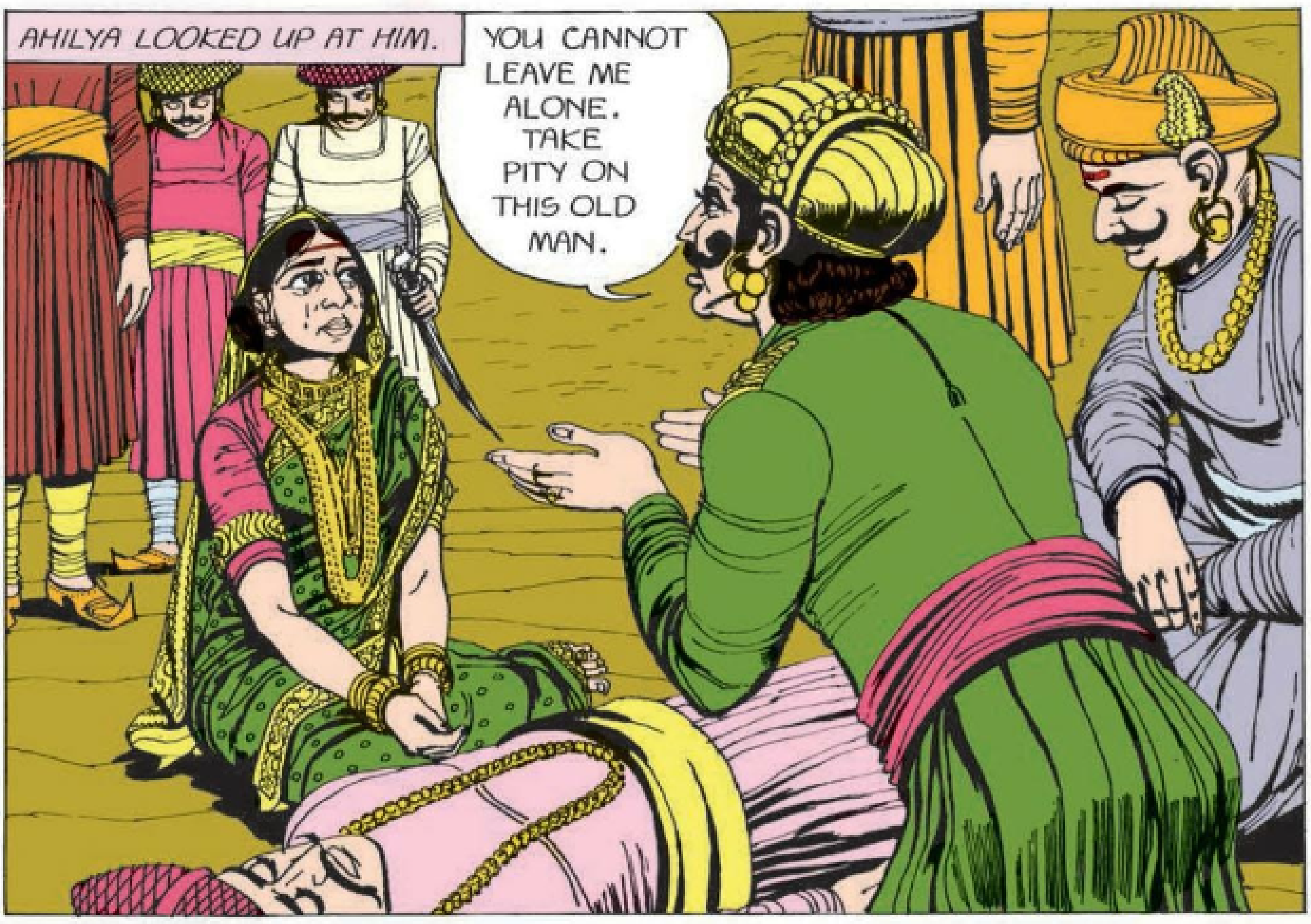
MALHARRAO LOST CONTROL OVER HIMSELF. HE RAN BERSERK – RAGHOBA AND OTHER SARDARS TRIED TO RESTRAIN HIM.

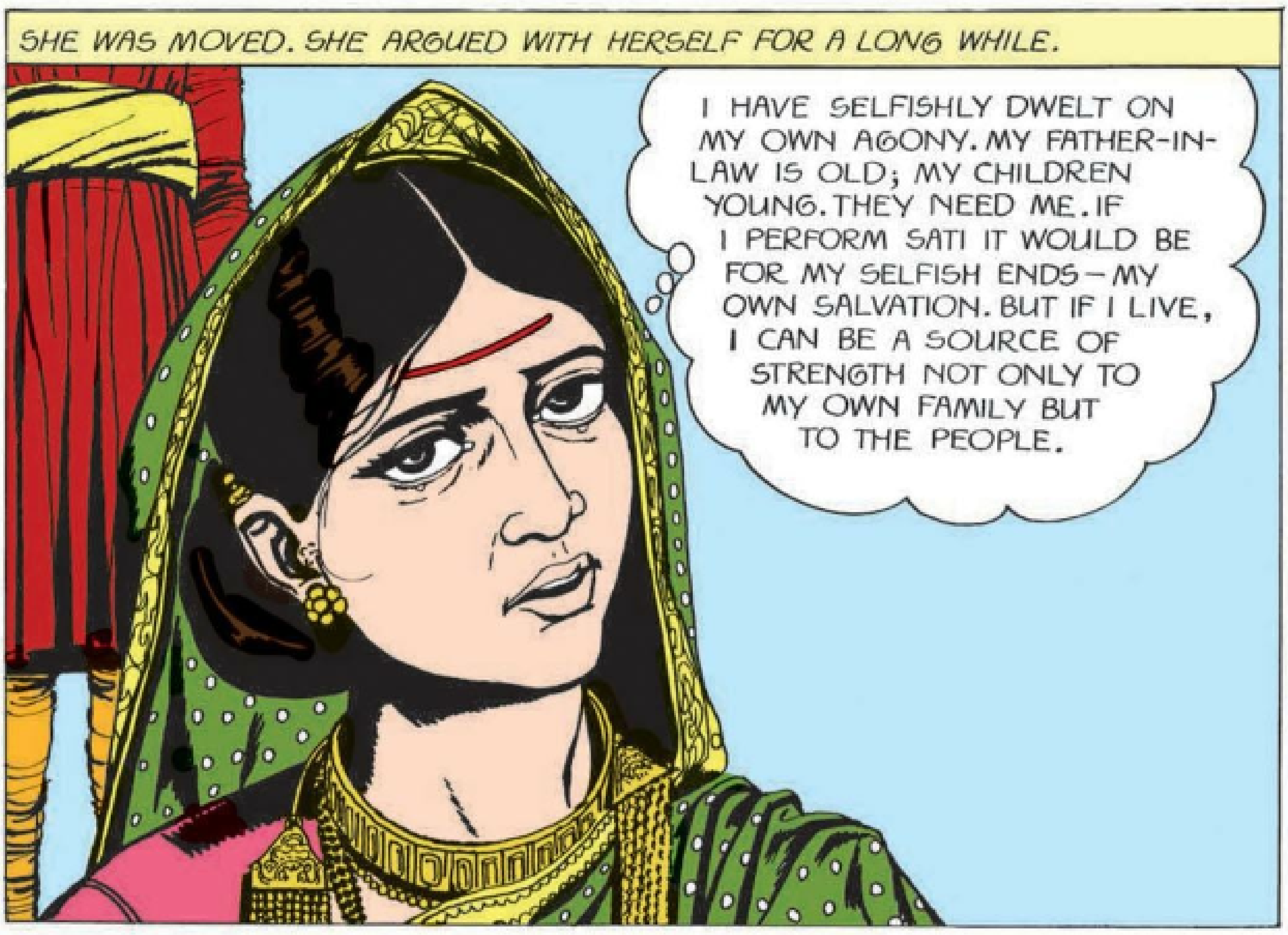
KHANDU, KHANDU...

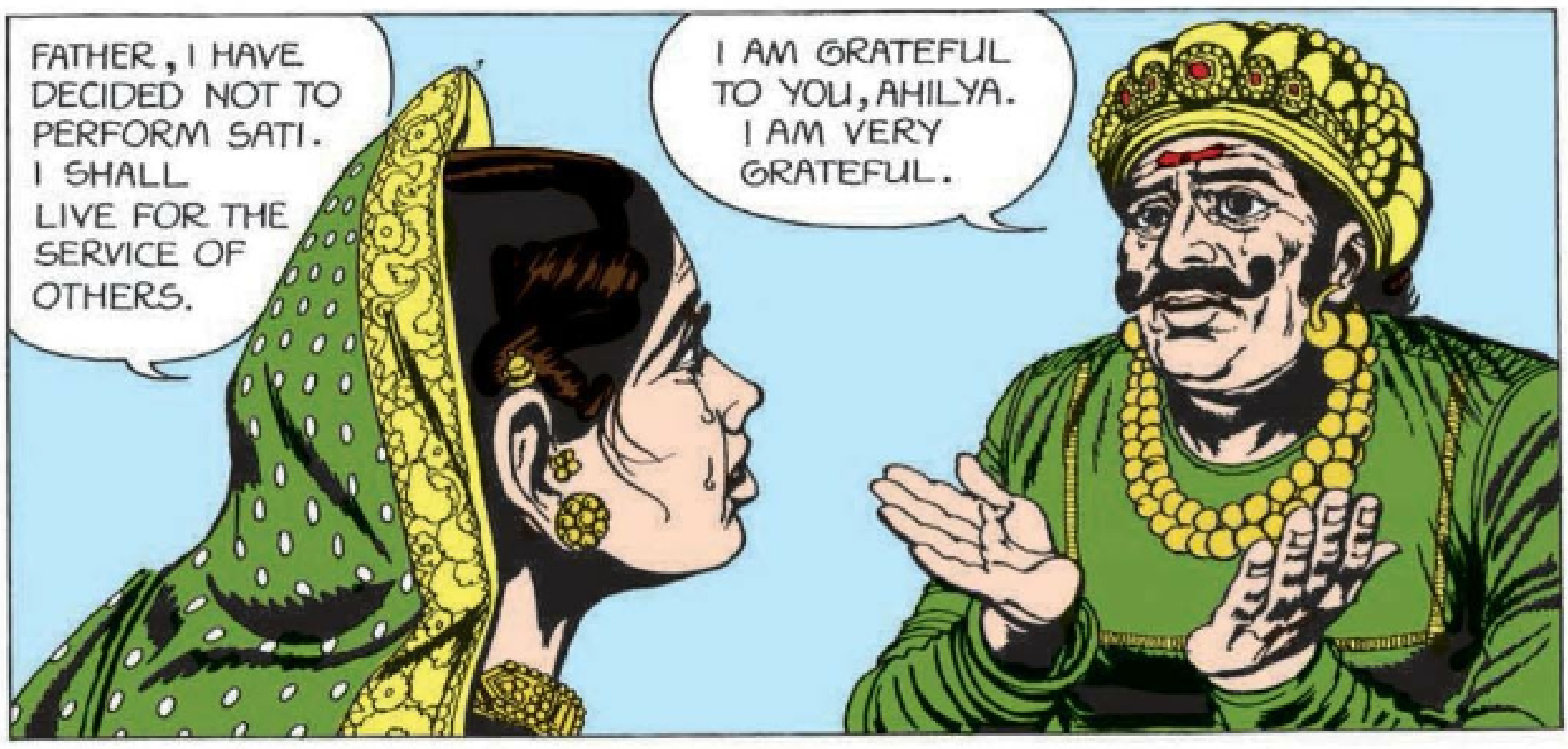

AHILYA CAME RUNNING FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.
WHY HAVE YOU LEFT ME? WHAT IS LIFE TO ME NOW? FOR WHOM SHOULD I LIVE?


WHEN HE SAW AHILYA BREAK DOWN, MALHARRAO CONTROLLED HIS OWN GRIEF. HE TRIED TO CONSOLE HIS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AS SHE CRIED HER HEART OUT.

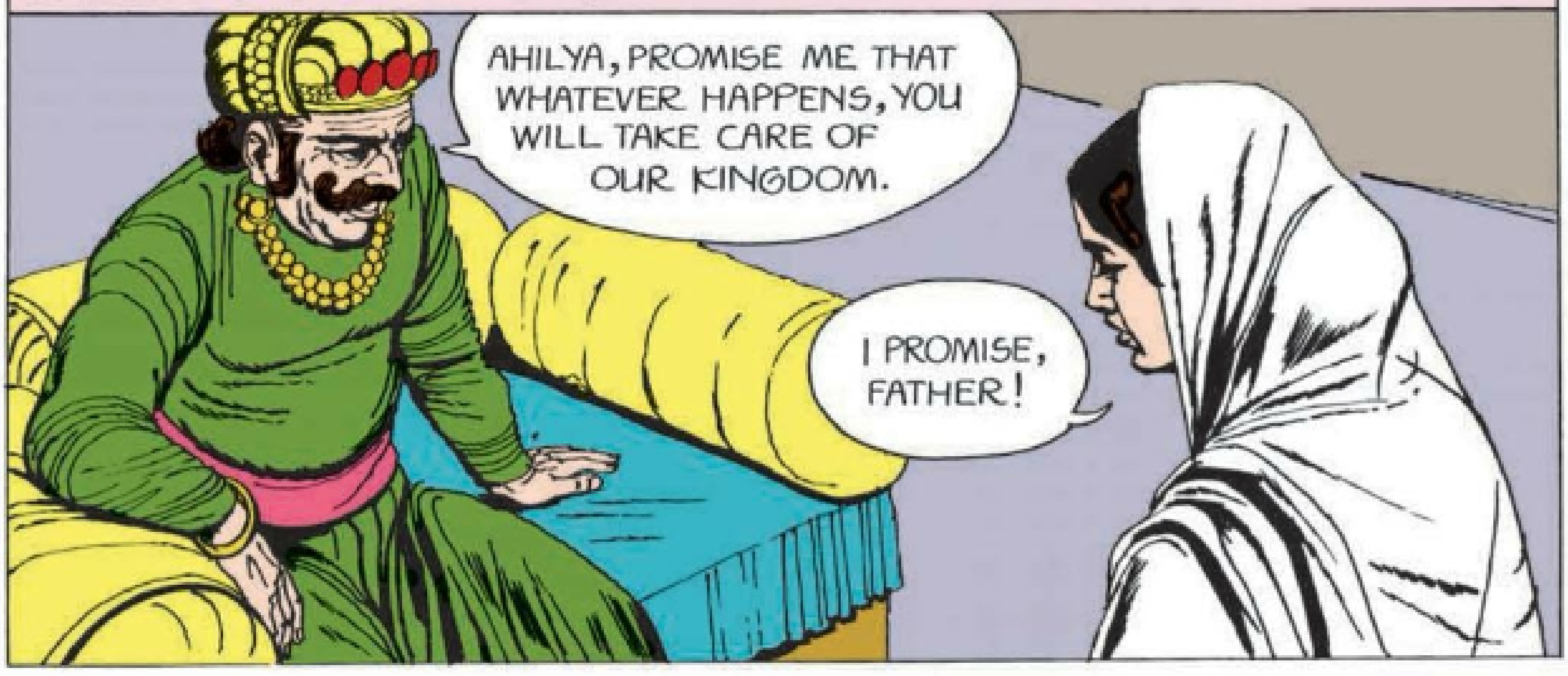

WHEN SHE HAD CALMED DOWN—
I MUST PREPARE MYSELF FOR SATI. I SHALL JOIN HIM.
NO! NEVER! AHILYA WHAT...


AHILYA LOOKED UP AT HIM.
YOU CANNOT LEAVE ME ALONE. TAKE PITY ON THIS OLD MAN.

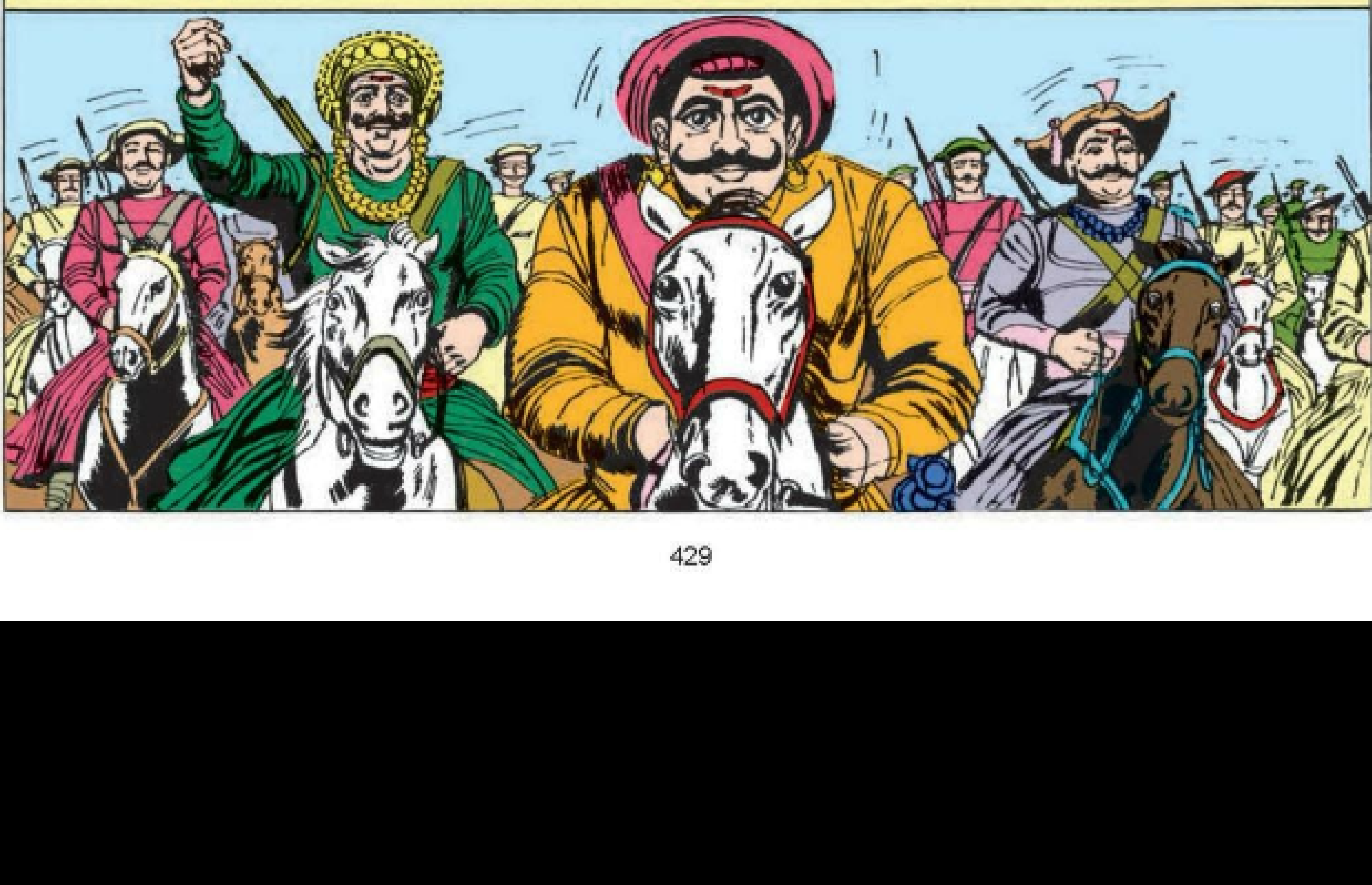

SHE WAS MOVED. SHE ARGUED WITH HERSELF FOR A LONG WHILE.
I HAVE SELFISHLY DWELT ON MY OWN AGONY. MY FATHER-IN-LAW IS OLD; MY CHILDREN YOUNG. THEY NEED ME. IF I PERFORM SATI IT WOULD BE FOR MY SELFISH ENDS — MY OWN SALVATION. BUT IF I LIVE, I CAN BE A SOURCE OF STRENGTH NOT ONLY TO MY OWN FAMILY BUT TO THE PEOPLE.


FATHER, I HAVE DECIDED NOT TO PERFORM SATI. I SHALL LIVE FOR THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.
I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, AHILYA. I AM VERY GRATEFUL.

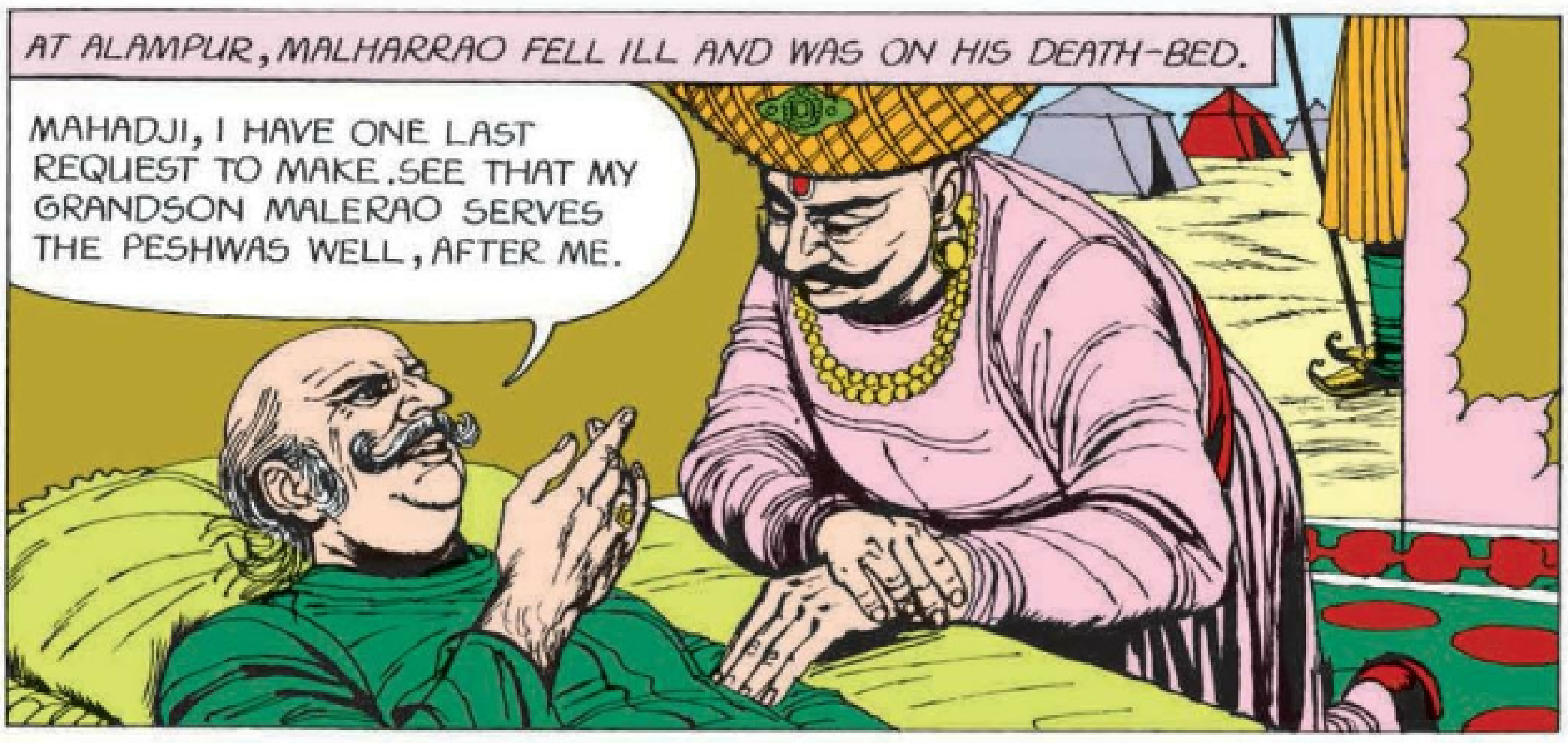
AS MALHARRAO GREW OLDER, HE RELIED MORE AND MORE ON AHILYA.


AHILYA, PROMISE ME THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU WILL TAKE CARE OF OUR KINGDOM.
I PROMISE, FATHER!

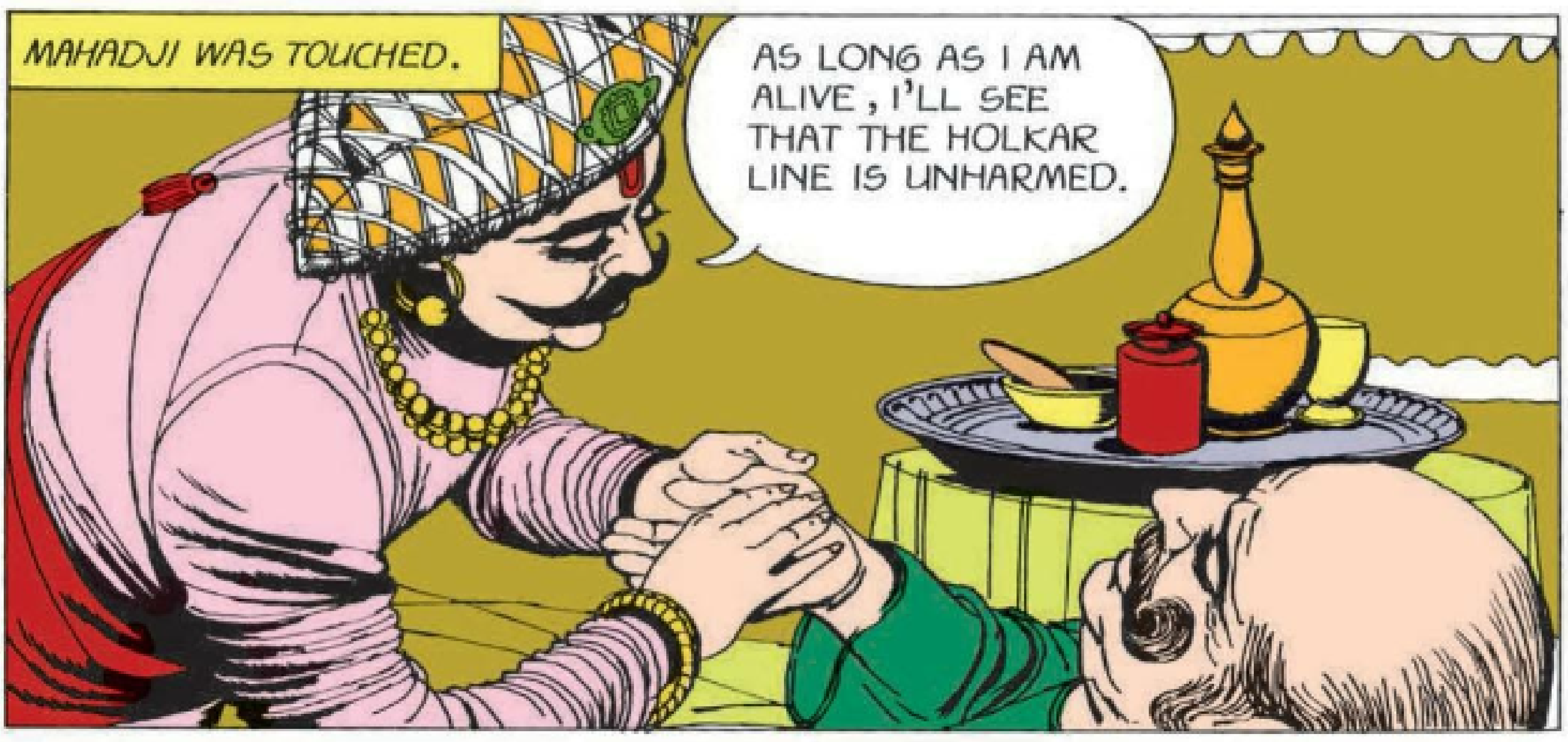
IN 1766 WHEN RAGHOBA, THE PESHWA'S UNCLE, WENT TO REGAIN THE PRESTIGE THEY HAD LOST AT THE BATTLE OF PANIPAT IN 1761, MALHARRAO WENT WITH HIM. MAHADJI SCINDIA OF GWALIOR, TOO, WAS WITH THEM.



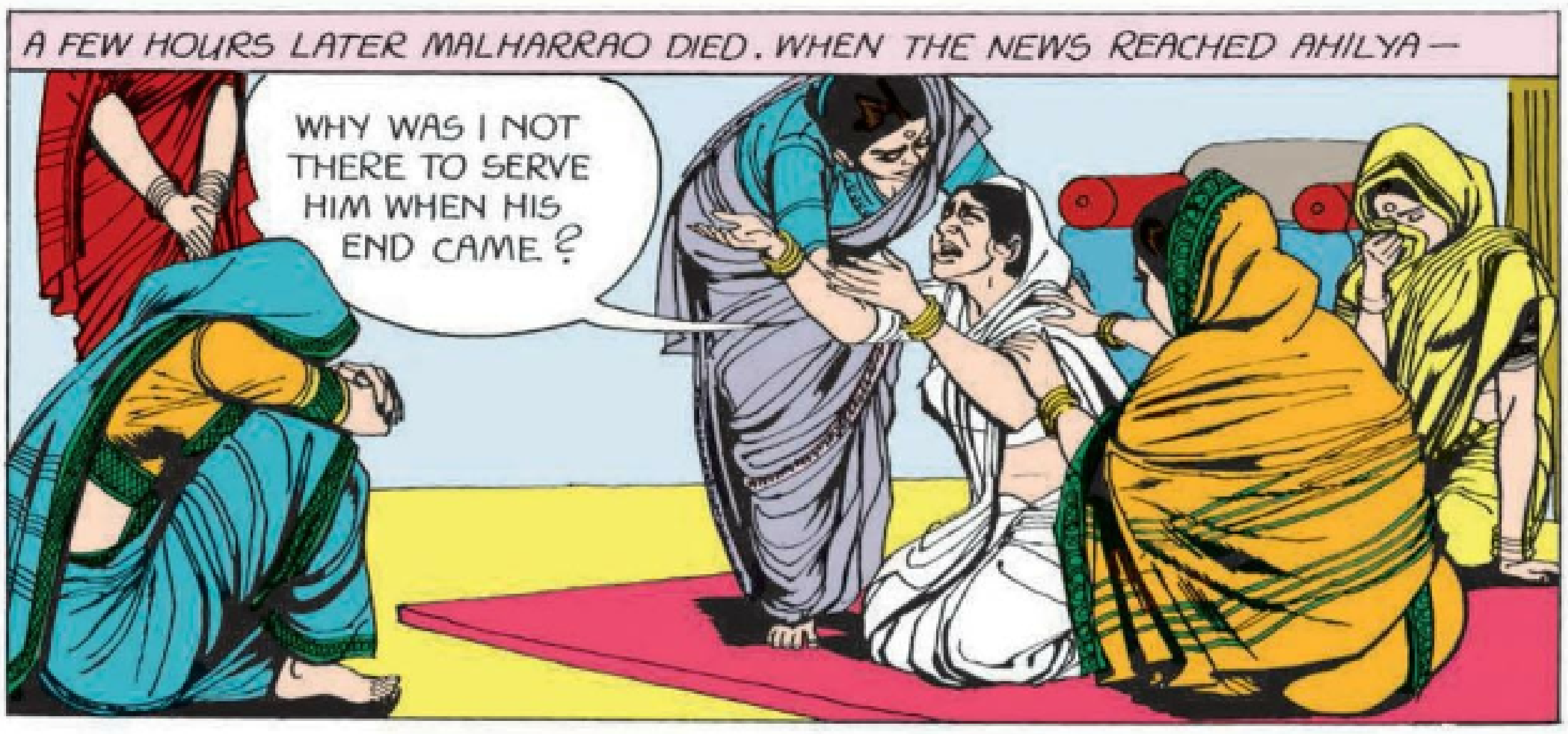
AT ALAMPUR, MALHARRAO FELL ILL AND WAS ON HIS DEATH-BED.

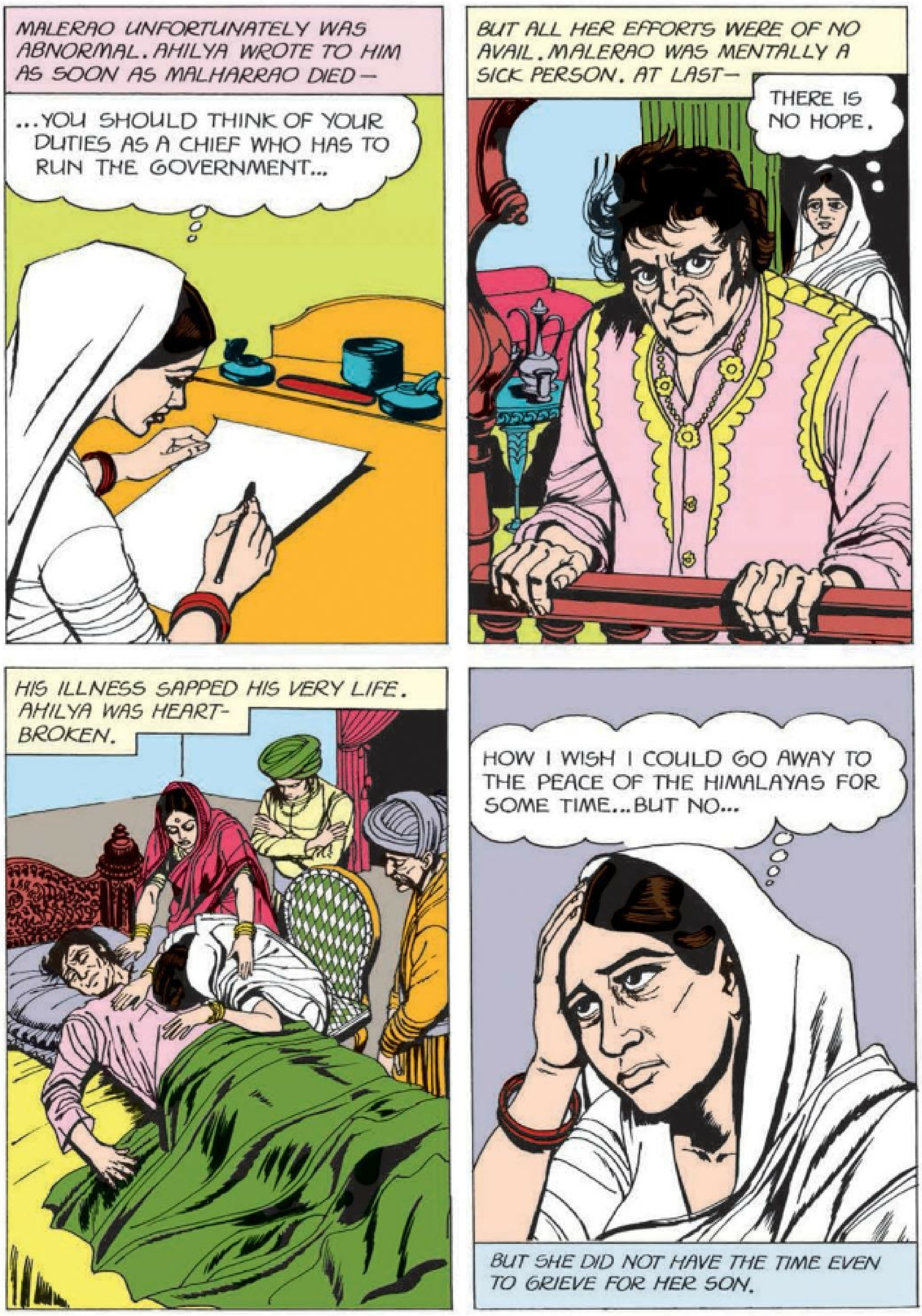

MAHADJI, I HAVE ONE LAST REQUEST TO MAKE. SEE THAT MY GRANDSON MALERAO SERVES THE PESHWAS WELL, AFTER ME.

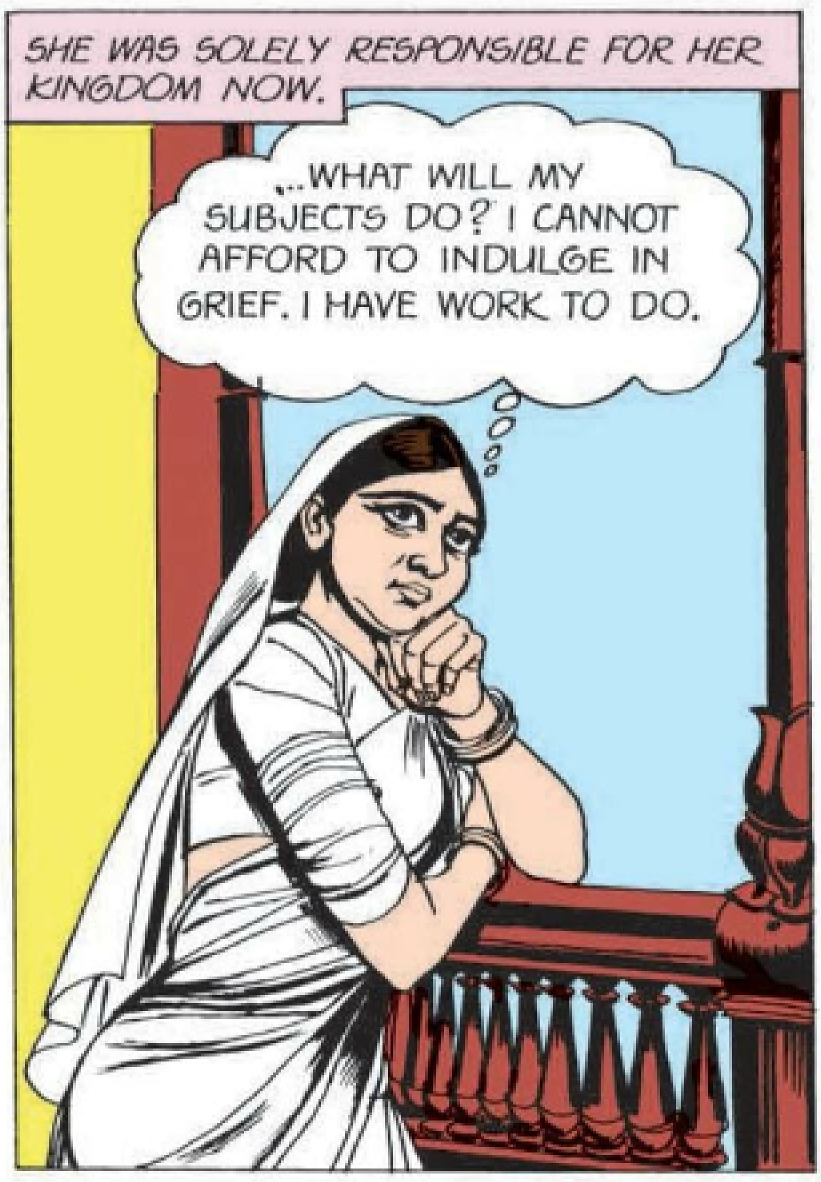
MAHADJI WAS TOUCHED.


AS LONG AS I AM ALIVE, I'LL SEE THAT THE HOLKAR LINE IS UNHARMED.

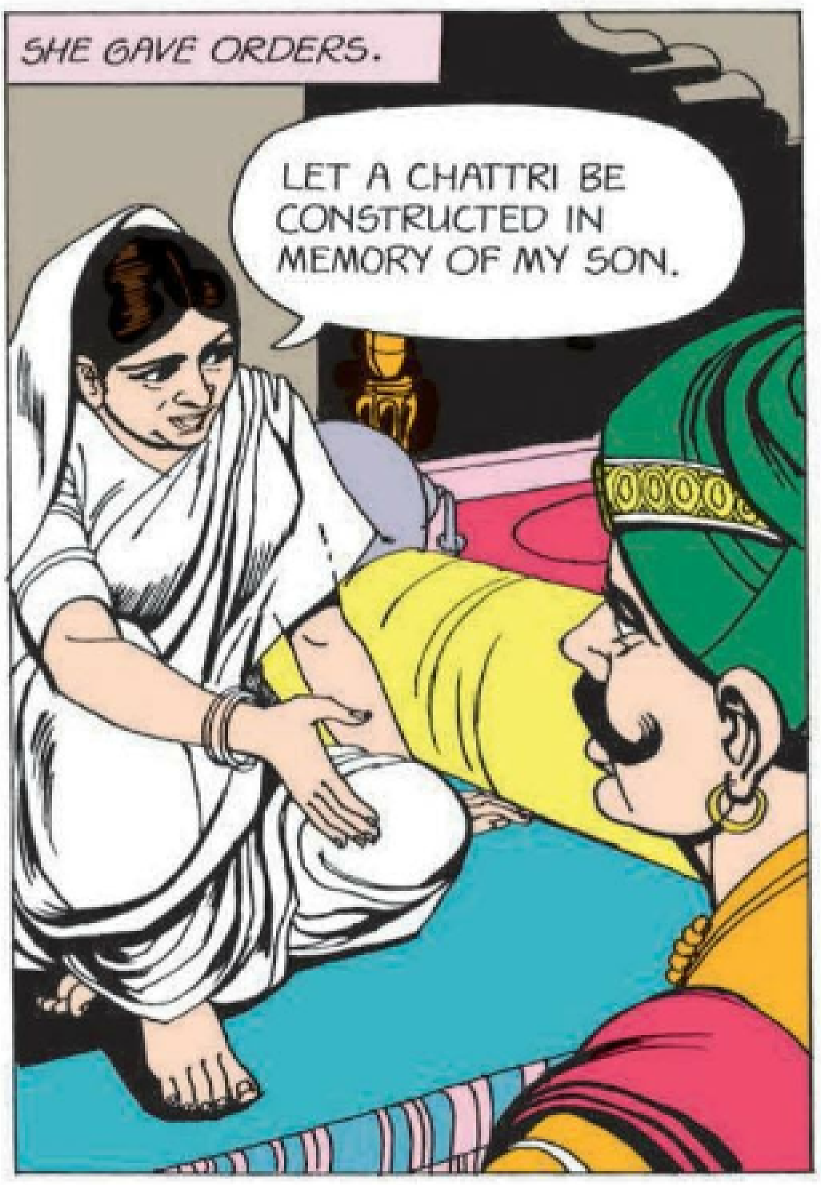
A FEW HOURS LATER MALHARRAO DIED. WHEN THE NEWS REACHED AHILYA—


WHY WAS I NOT THERE TO SERVE HIM WHEN HIS END CAME?

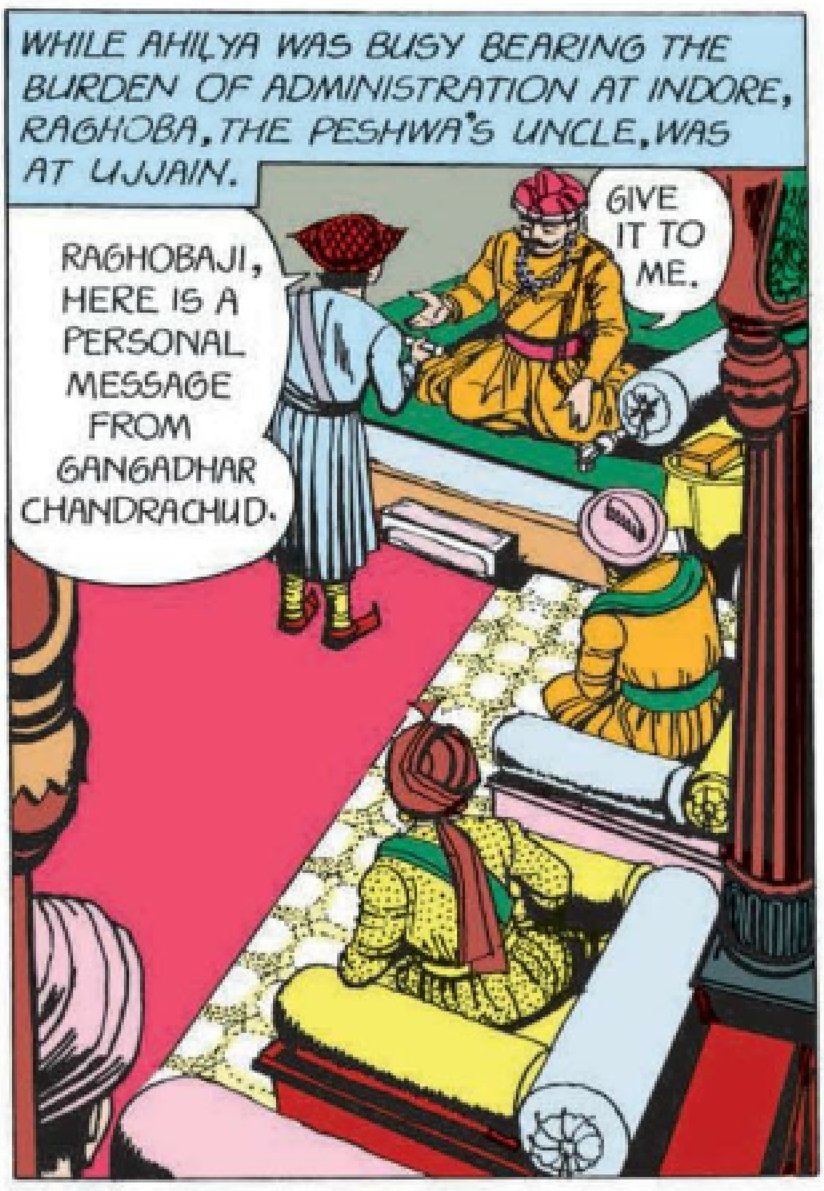

MALERAO UNFORTUNATELY WAS ABNORMAL. AHILYA WROTE TO HIM AS SOON AS MALHARRAO DIED–
...YOU SHOULD THINK OF YOUR DUTIES AS A CHIEF WHO HAS TO RUN THE GOVERNMENT...
BUT ALL HER EFFORTS WERE OF NO AVAIL. MALERAO WAS MENTALLY A SICK PERSON. AT LAST–
THERE IS NO HOPE.
HIS ILLNESS SAPPED HIS VERY LIFE. AHILYA WAS HEART-BROKEN.
HOW I WISH I COULD GO AWAY TO THE PEACE OF THE HIMALAYAS FOR SOME TIME...BUT NO...
BUT SHE DID NOT HAVE THE TIME EVEN TO GRIEVE FOR HER SON.


SHE WAS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR HER KINGDOM NOW.

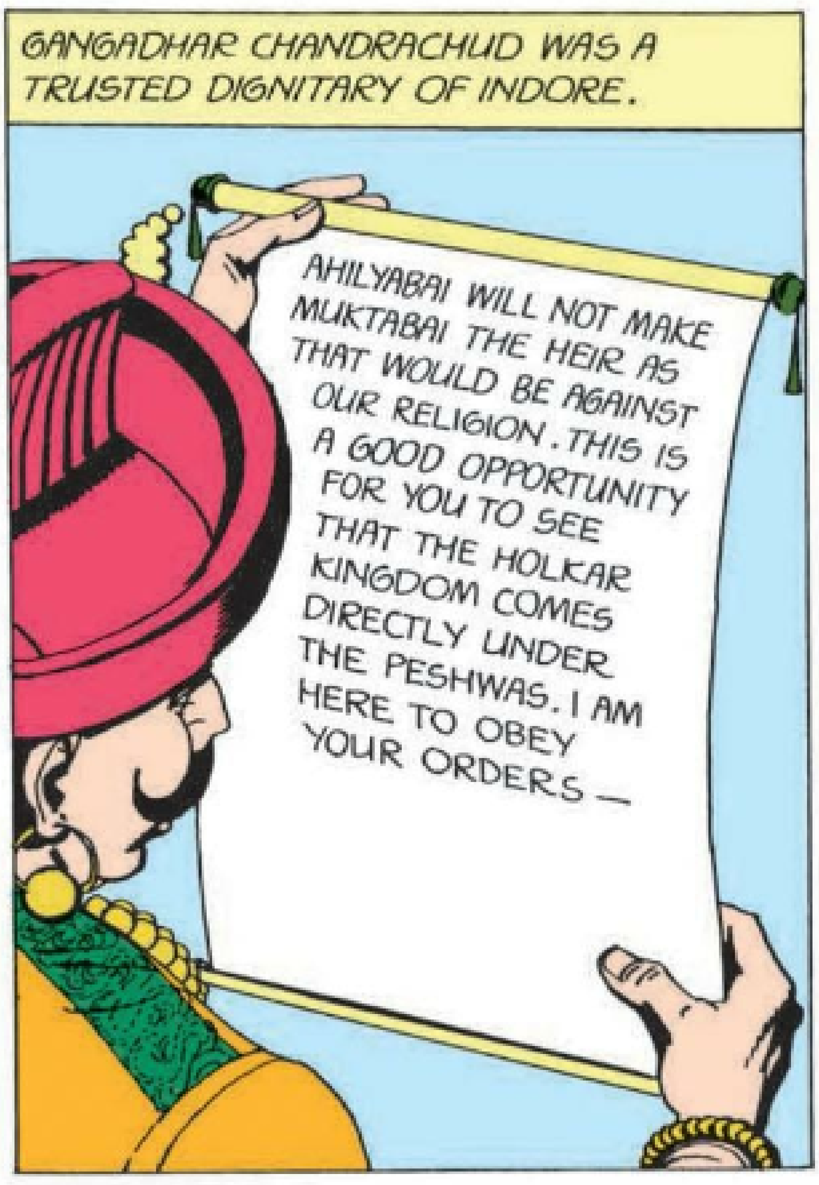
...WHAT WILL MY SUBJECTS DO? I CANNOT AFFORD TO INDULGE IN GRIEF. I HAVE WORK TO DO.


SHE GAVE ORDERS.

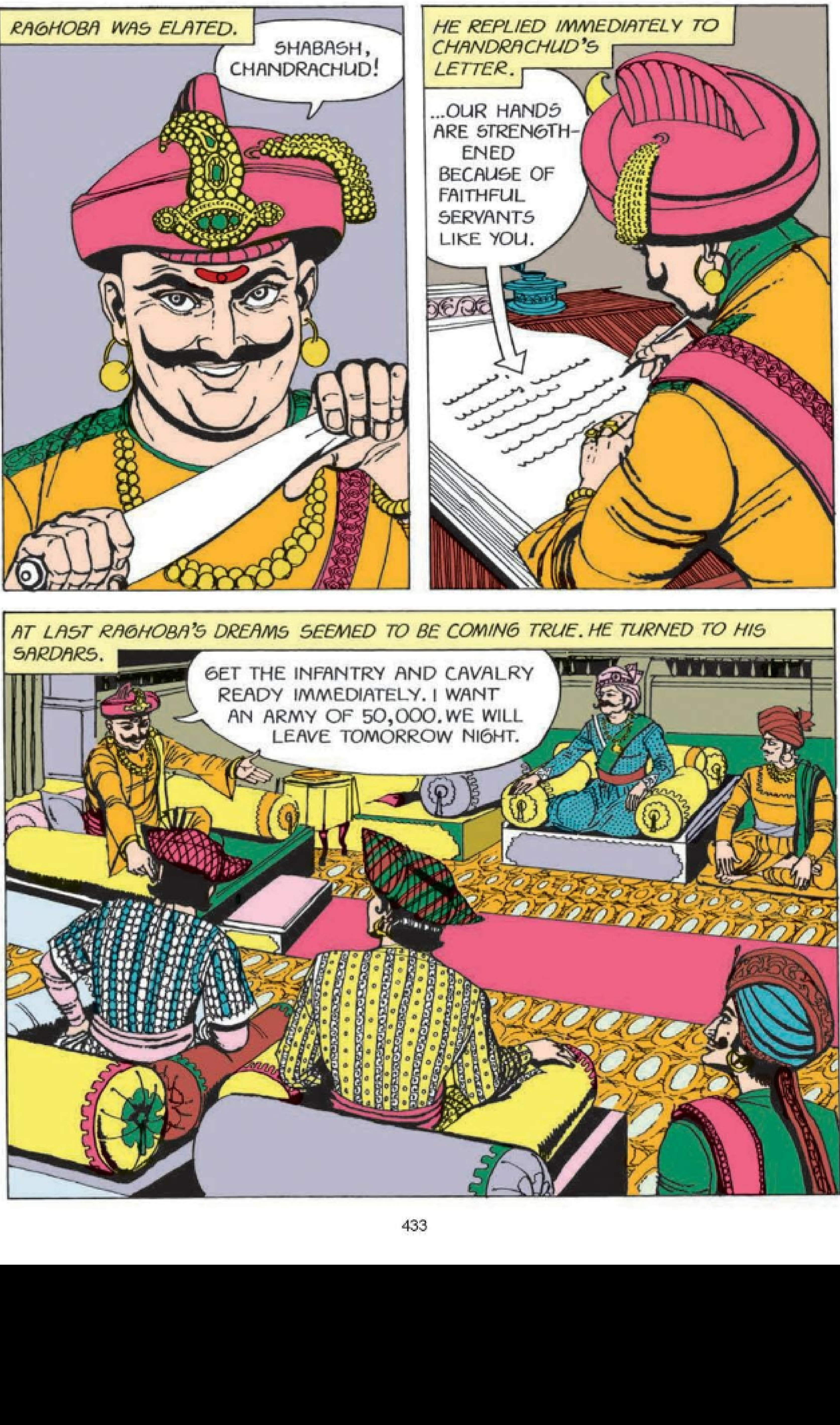
LET A CHATTRI BE CONSTRUCTED IN MEMORY OF MY SON.

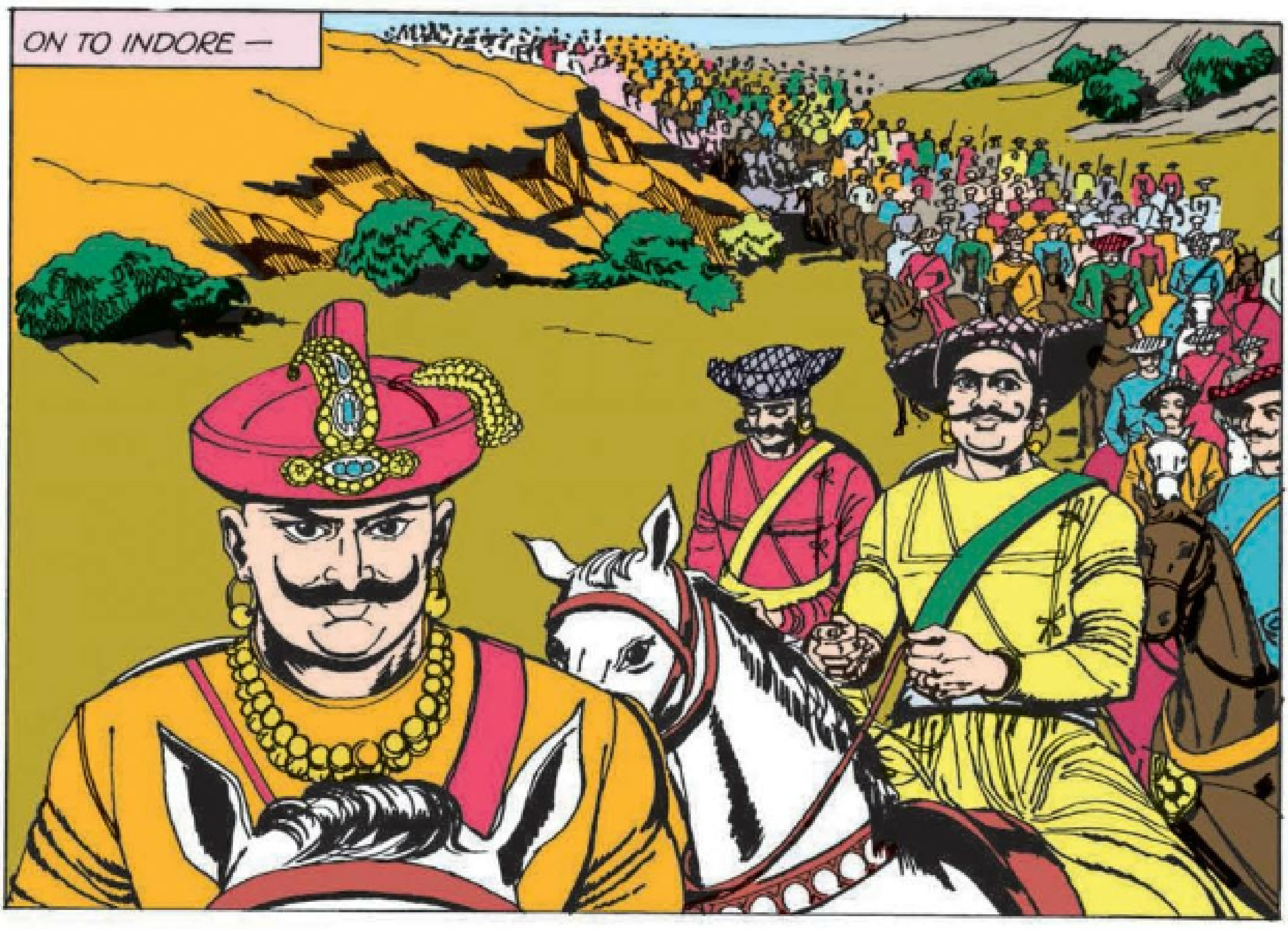

WHILE AHILYA WAS BUSY BEARING THE BURDEN OF ADMINISTRATION AT INDORE, RAGHOBA, THE PESHWA'S UNCLE, WAS AT UJJAIN.

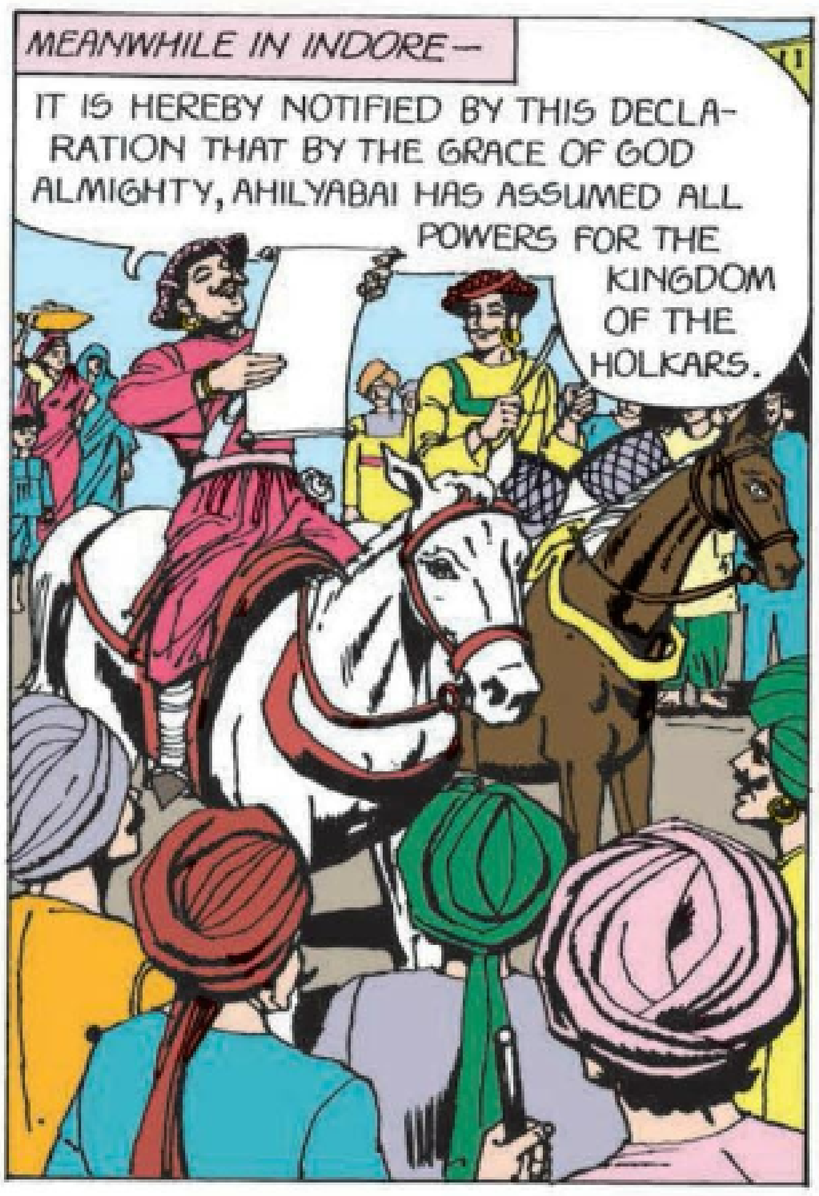
RAGHOBAJI, HERE IS A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM GANGADHAR CHANDRACHUD.
GIVE IT TO ME.

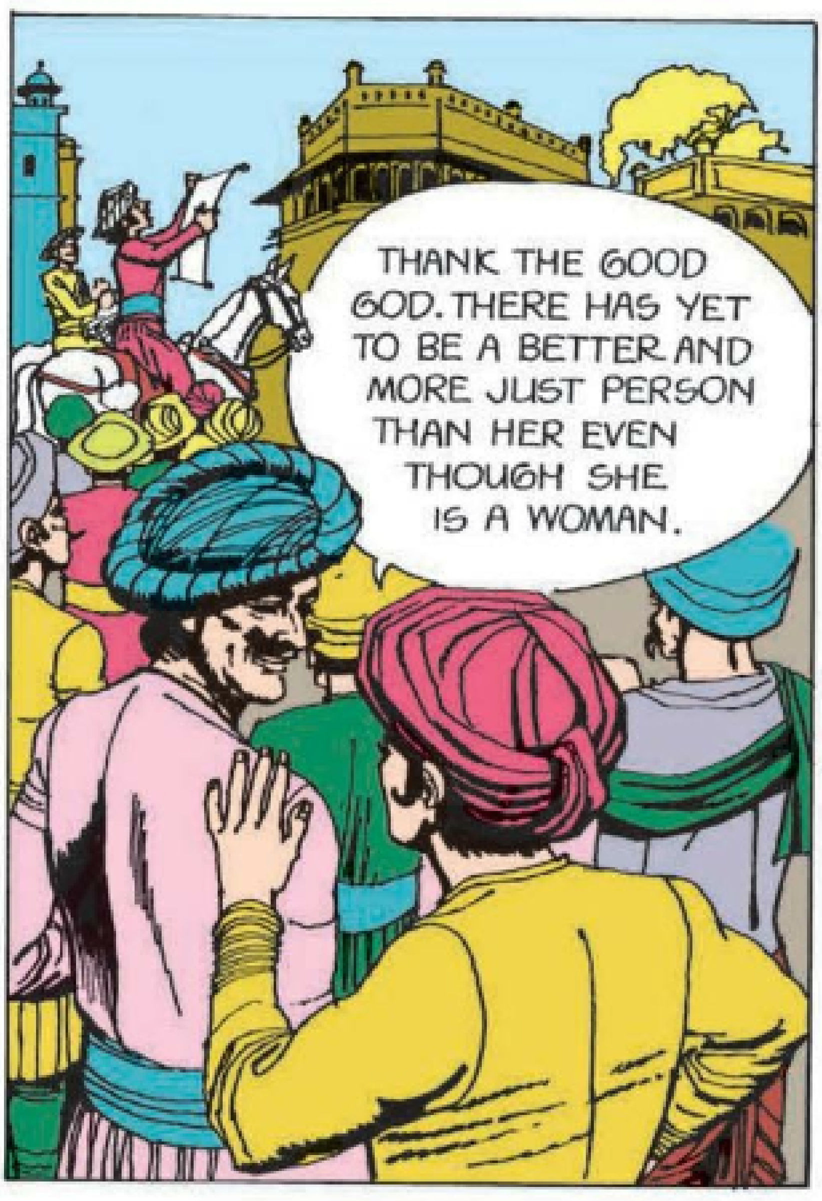

GANGADHAR CHANDRACHUD WAS A TRUSTED DIGNITARY OF INDORE.

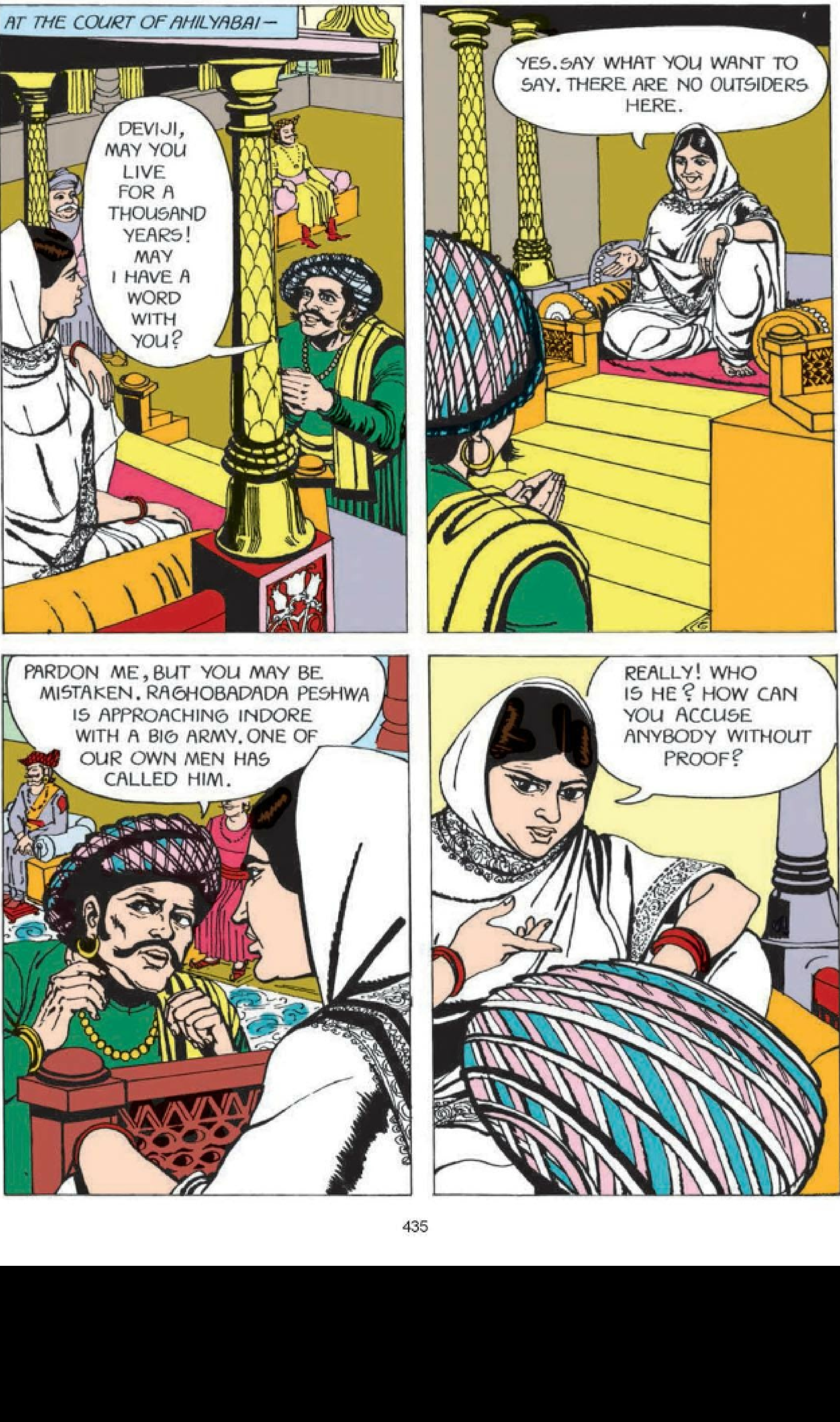
AHILYABAI WILL NOT MAKE MUKTABAI THE HEIR AS THAT WOULD BE AGAINST OUR RELIGION. THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO SEE THAT THE HOLKAR KINGDOM COMES DIRECTLY UNDER THE PESHWAS. I AM HERE TO OBEY YOUR ORDERS —

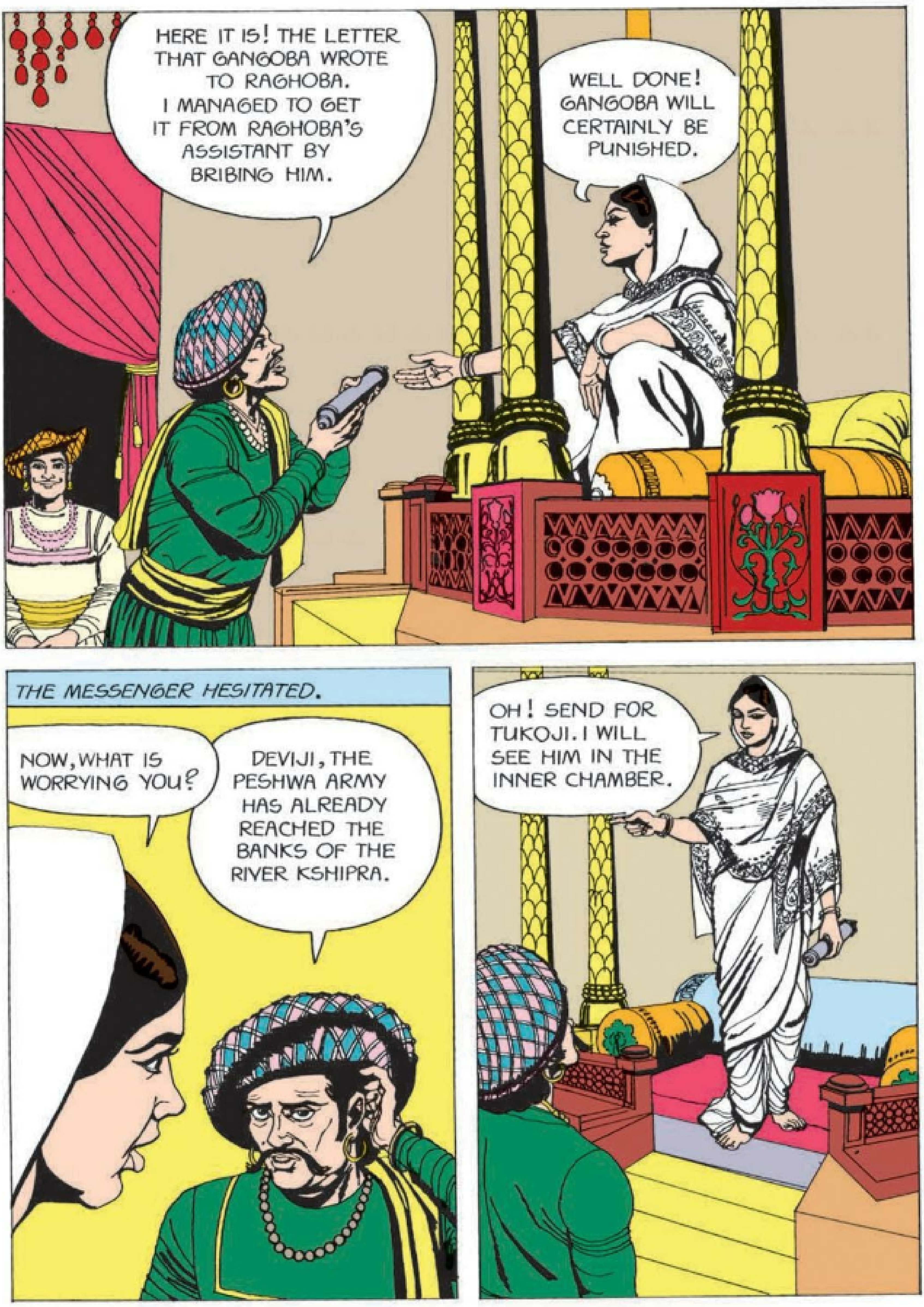

RAGHOBA WAS ELATED.
SHABASH, CHANDRACHUD!
HE REPLIED IMMEDIATELY TO CHANDRACHUD'S LETTER.
...OUR HANDS ARE STRENGTHENED BECAUSE OF FAITHFUL SERVANTS LIKE YOU.
AT LAST RAGHOBA'S DREAMS SEEMED TO BE COMING TRUE. HE TURNED TO HIS SARDARS.
GET THE INFANTRY AND CAVALRY READY IMMEDIATELY. I WANT AN ARMY OF 50,000. WE WILL LEAVE TOMORROW NIGHT.

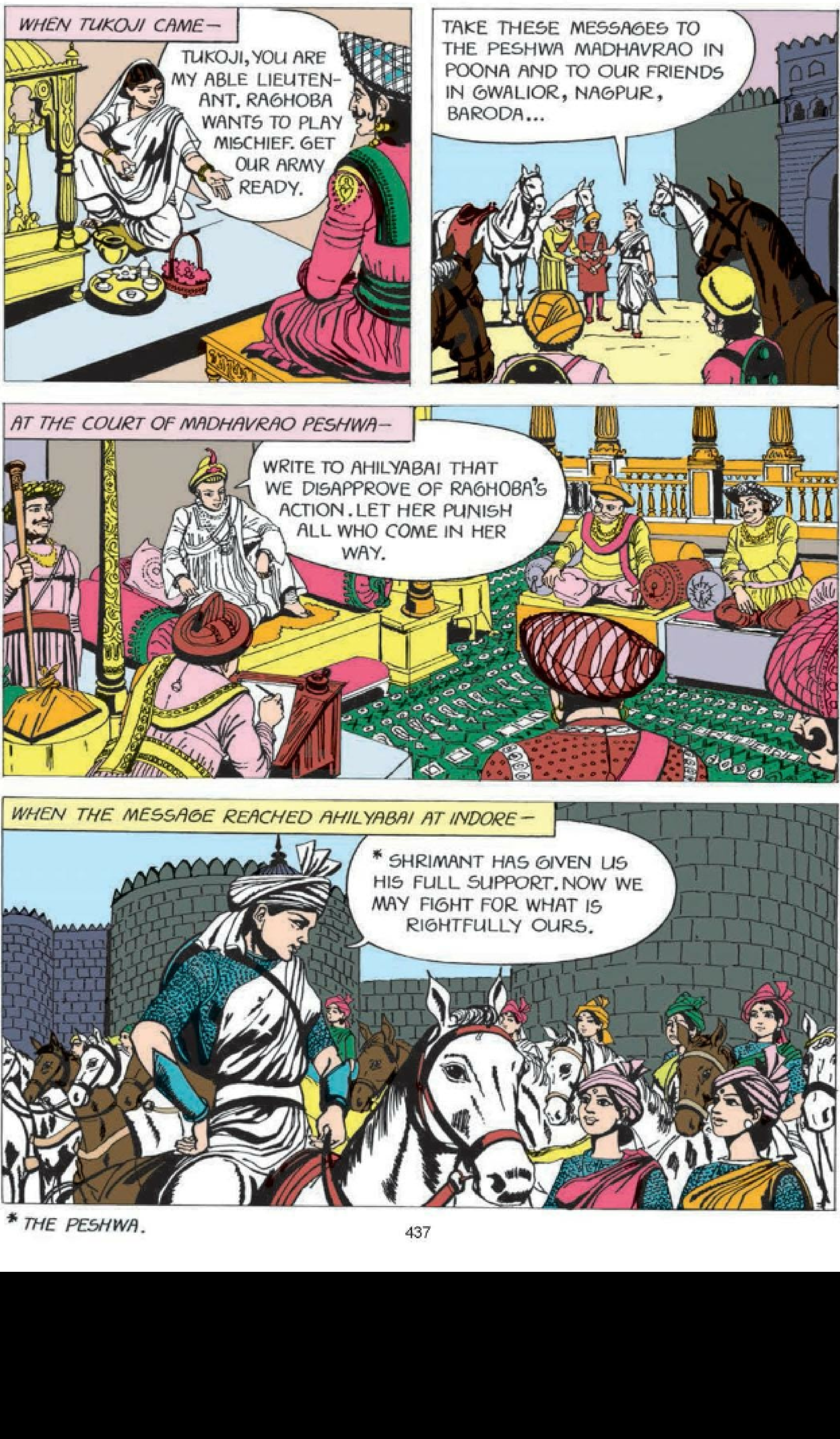

ON TO INDORE –


MEANWHILE IN INDORE –
IT IS HEREBY NOTIFIED BY THIS DECLARATION THAT BY THE GRACE OF GOD ALMIGHTY, AHILYABAI HAS ASSUMED ALL POWERS FOR THE KINGDOM OF THE HOLKARS.

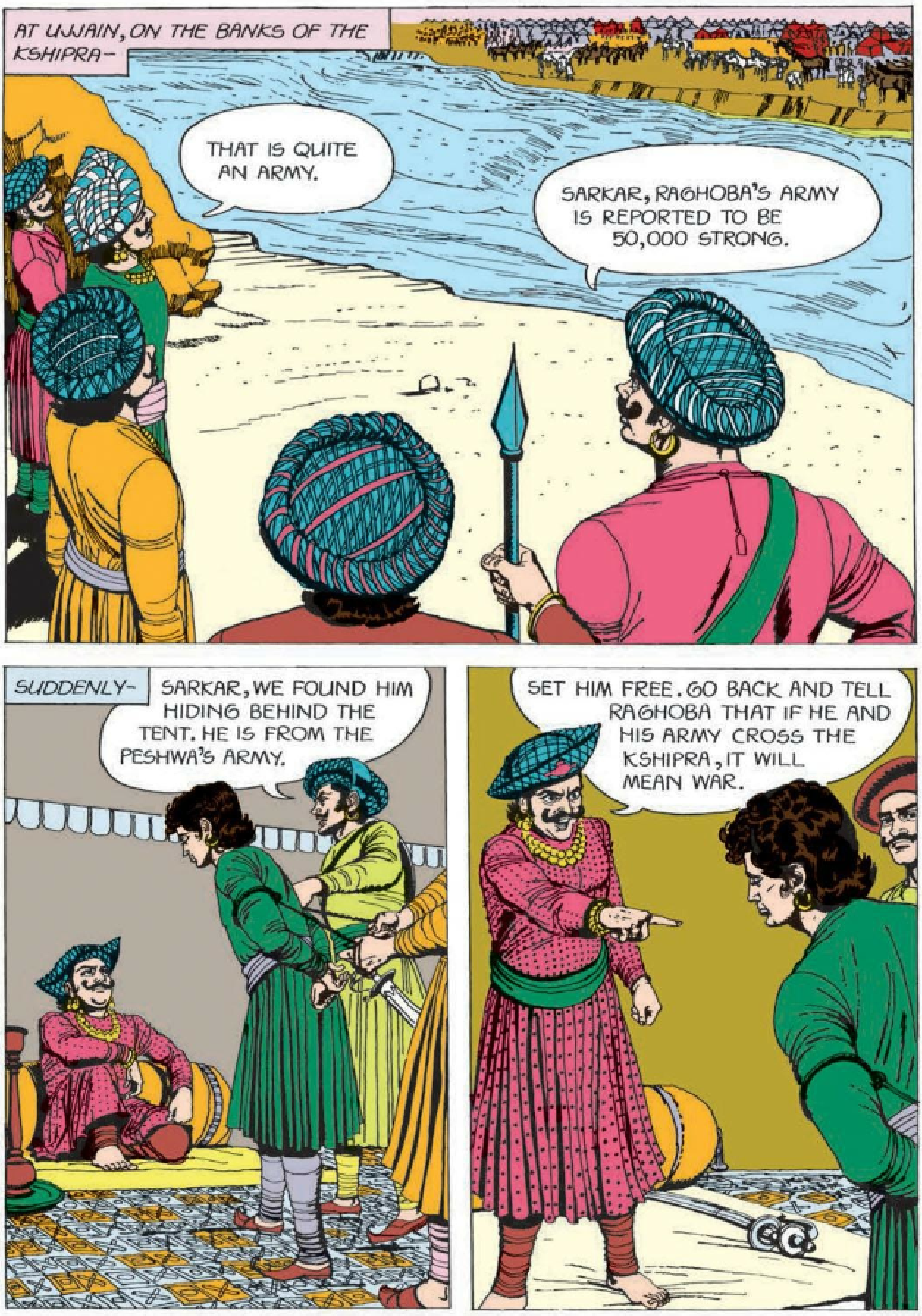

THANK THE GOOD GOD. THERE HAS YET TO BE A BETTER AND MORE JUST PERSON THAN HER EVEN THOUGH SHE IS A WOMAN.

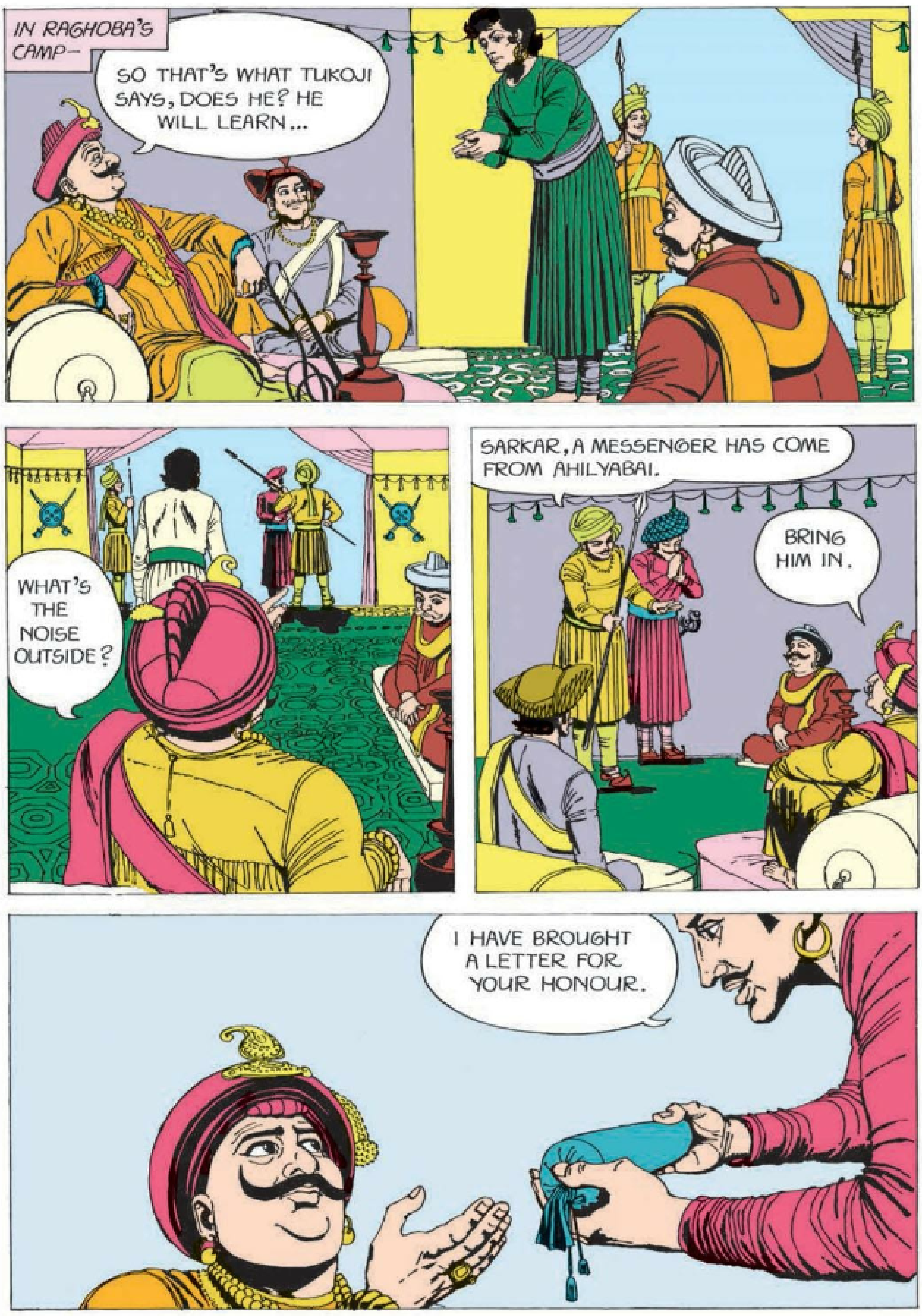

AT THE COURT OF AHILYABAI—
DEVIJI, MAY YOU LIVE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS! MAY I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU?
YES. SAY WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY. THERE ARE NO OUTSIDERS HERE.
PARDON ME, BUT YOU MAY BE MISTAKEN. RAGHOBADADA PESHWA IS APPROACHING INDORE WITH A BIG ARMY. ONE OF OUR OWN MEN HAS CALLED HIM.
REALLY! WHO IS HE? HOW CAN YOU ACCUSE ANYBODY WITHOUT PROOF?

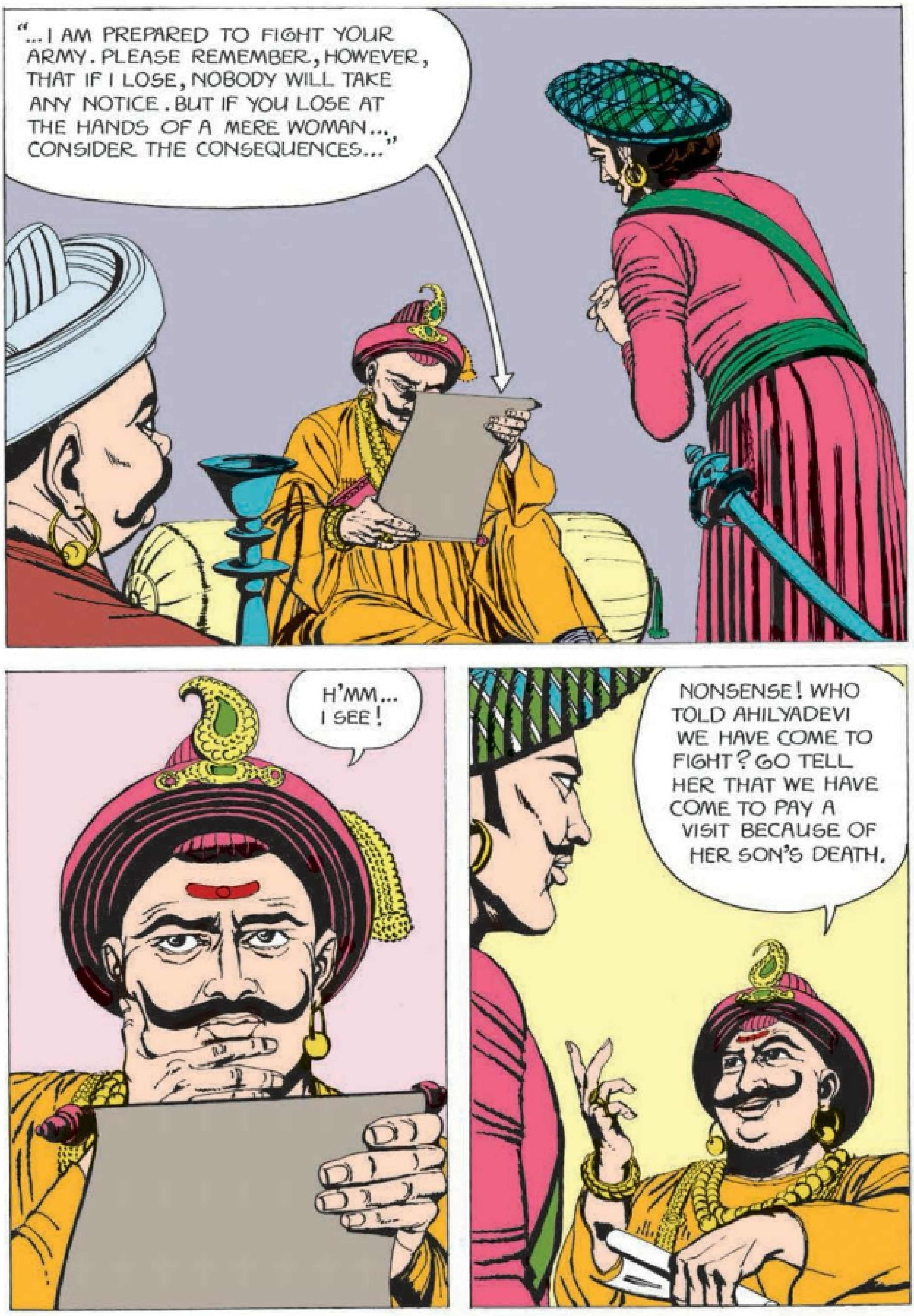

HERE IT IS! THE LETTER THAT GANGOBA WROTE TO RAGHOBA. I MANAGED TO GET IT FROM RAGHOBA'S ASSISTANT BY BRIBING HIM.
WELL DONE! GANGOBA WILL CERTAINLY BE PUNISHED.
THE MESSENGER HESITATED.
NOW, WHAT IS WORRYING YOU?
DEVIJI, THE PESHWA ARMY HAS ALREADY REACHED THE BANKS OF THE RIVER KSHIPRA.
OH! SEND FOR TUKOJI. I WILL SEE HIM IN THE INNER CHAMBER.

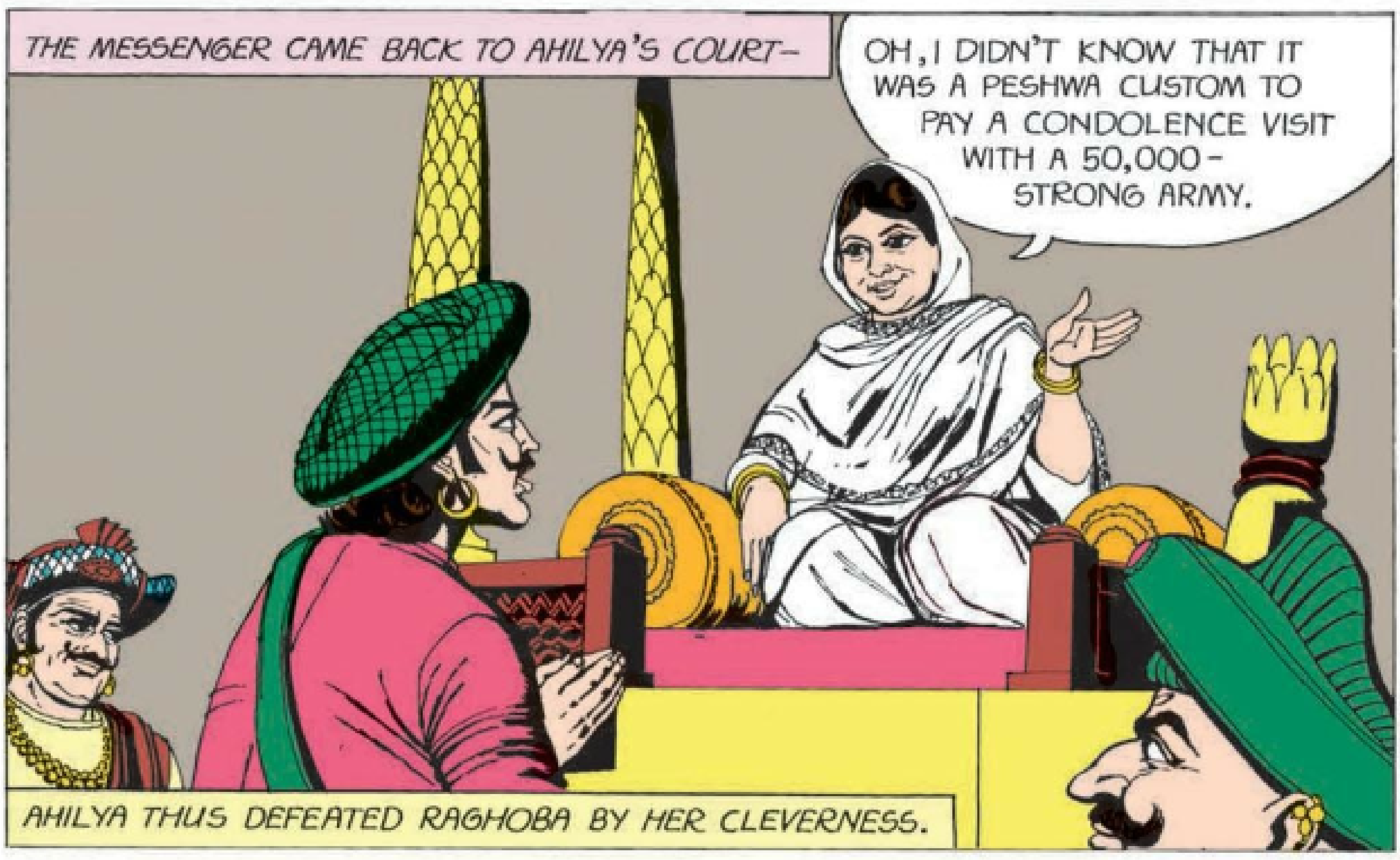

WHEN TUKOJI CAME—
TUKOJI, YOU ARE MY ABLE LIEUTENANT. RAGHOBA WANTS TO PLAY MISCHIEF. GET OUR ARMY READY.
TAKE THESE MESSAGES TO THE PESHWA MADHAVRAO IN POONA AND TO OUR FRIENDS IN GWALIOR, NAGPUR, BARODA...
AT THE COURT OF MADHAVRAO PESHWA—
WRITE TO AHILYABAI THAT WE DISAPPROVE OF RAGHOBA'S ACTION. LET HER PUNISH ALL WHO COME IN HER WAY.
WHEN THE MESSAGE REACHED AHILYABAI AT INDORE—
* SHRIMANT HAS GIVEN US HIS FULL SUPPORT. NOW WE MAY FIGHT FOR WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS.

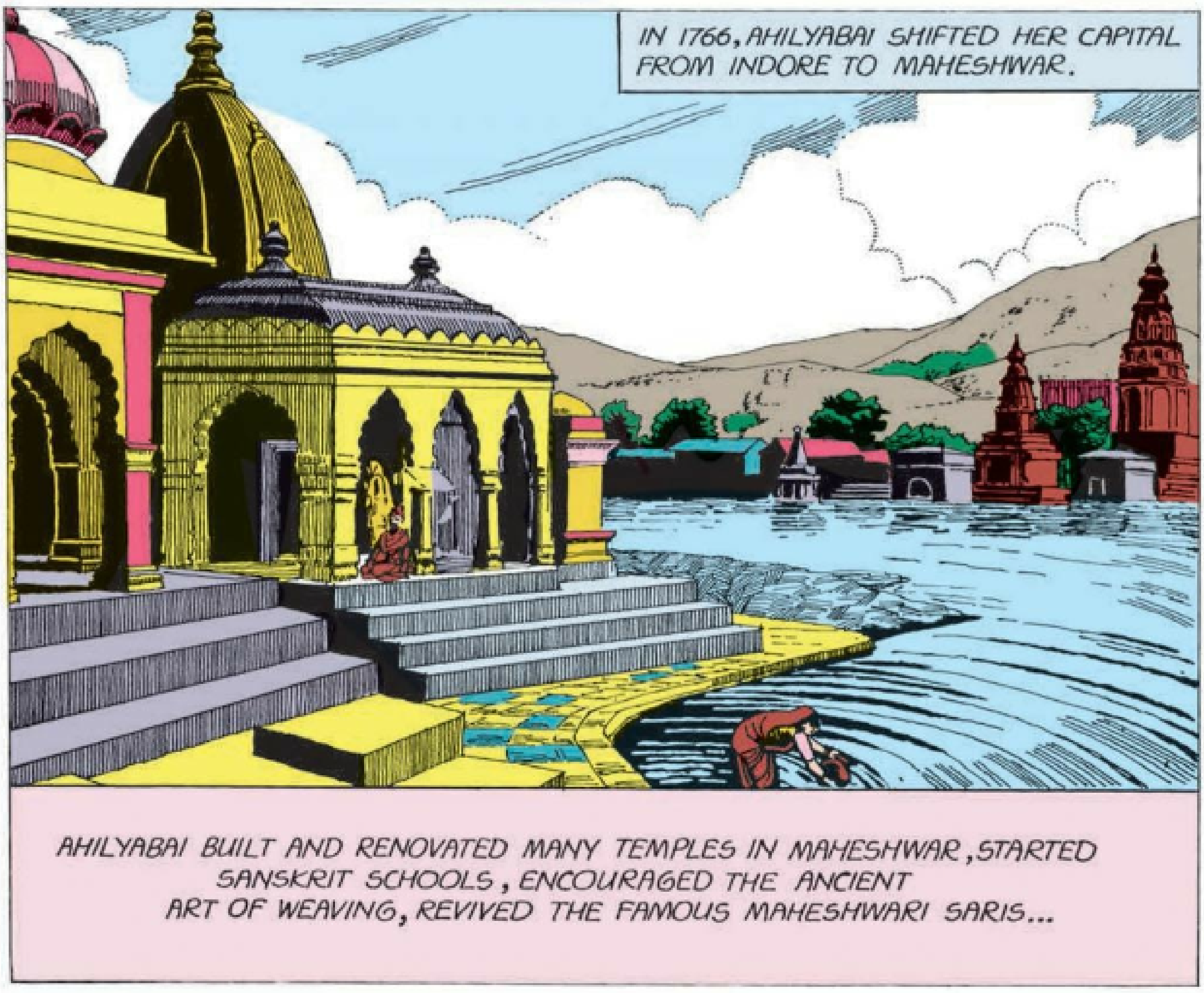
* *THE PESHWA.*

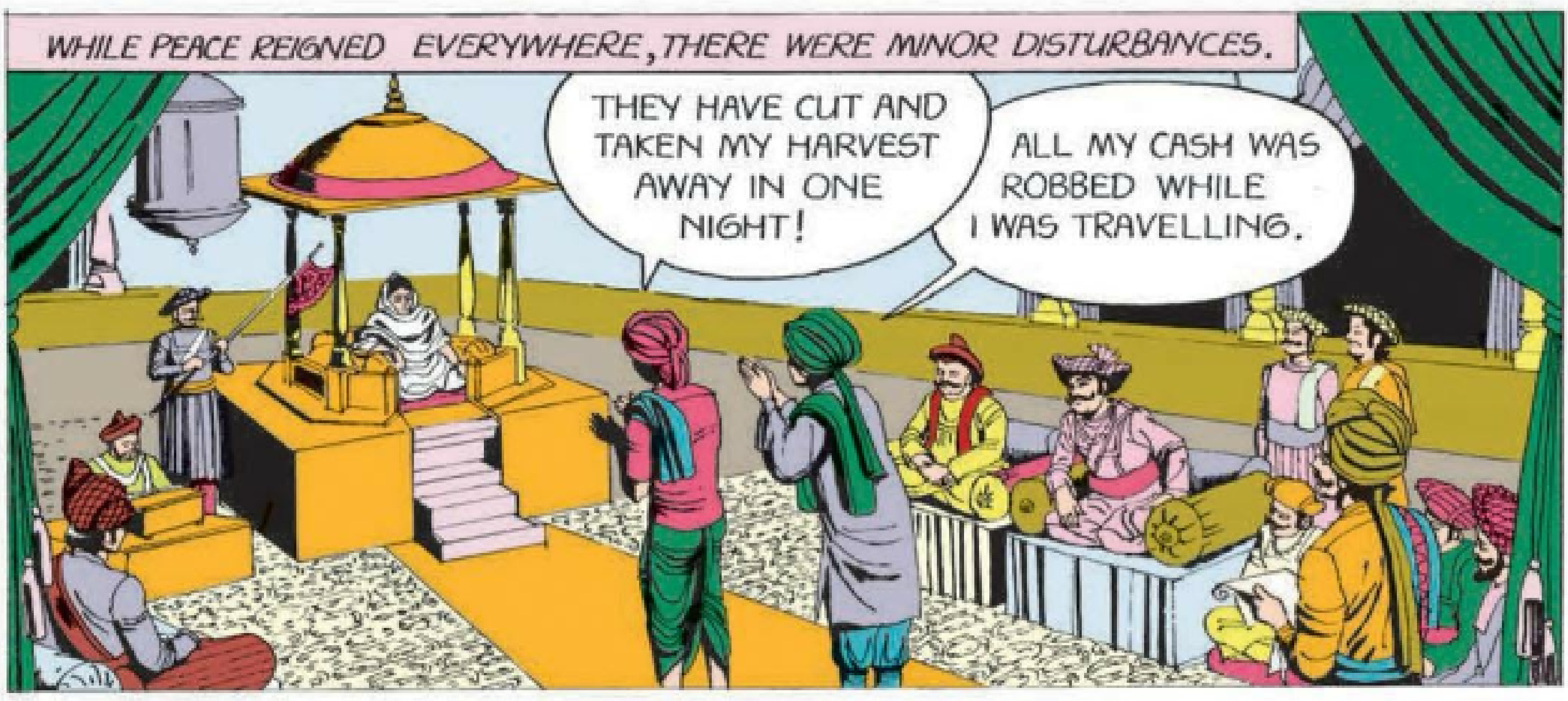

AT UJJAIN, ON THE BANKS OF THE KSHIPRA–
THAT IS QUITE AN ARMY.
SARKAR, RAGHOBA'S ARMY IS REPORTED TO BE 50,000 STRONG.
SUDDENLY–
SARKAR, WE FOUND HIM HIDING BEHIND THE TENT. HE IS FROM THE PESHWA'S ARMY.
SET HIM FREE. GO BACK AND TELL RAGHOBA THAT IF HE AND HIS ARMY CROSS THE KSHIPRA, IT WILL MEAN WAR.

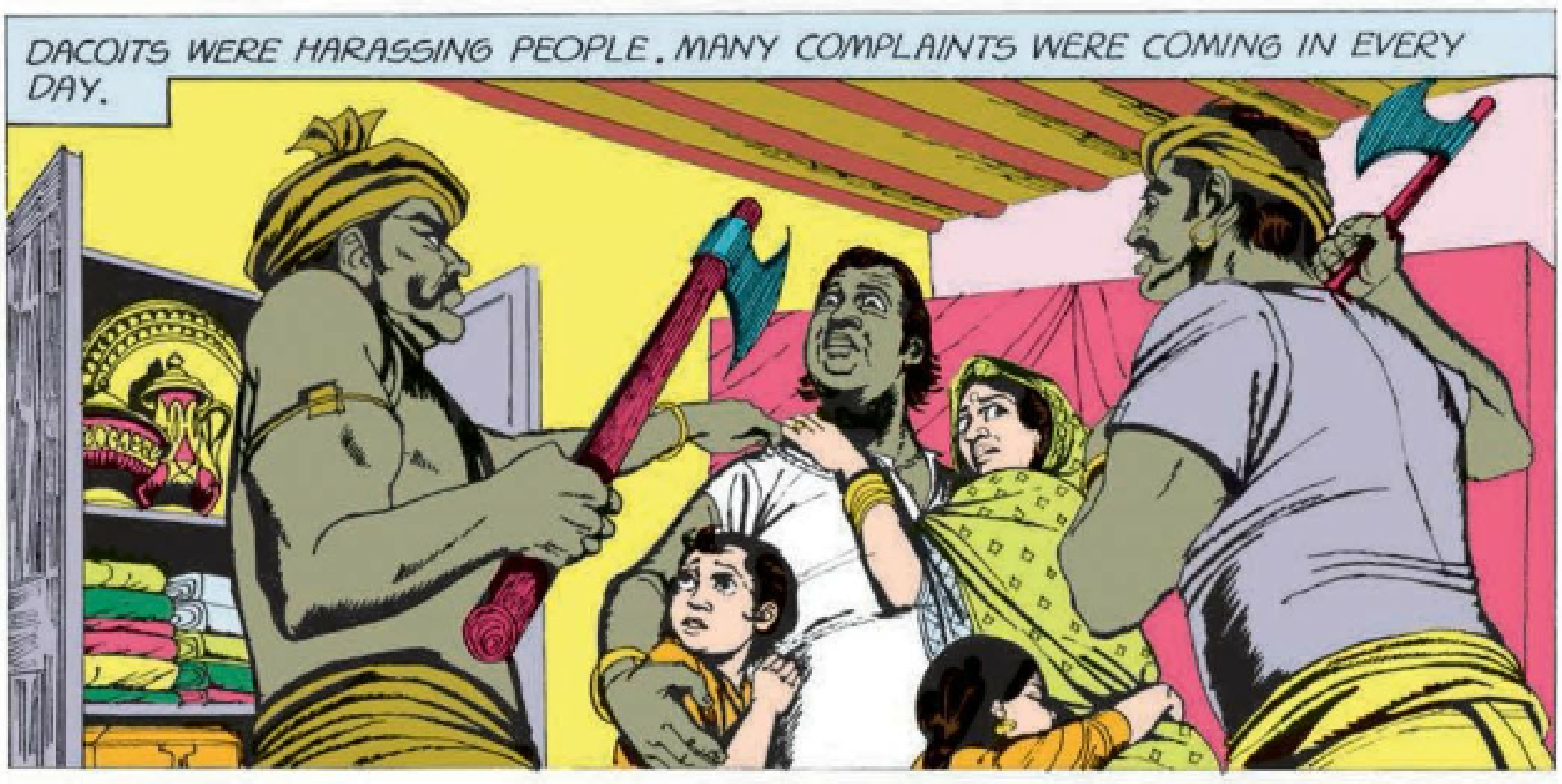

IN RAGHOBA'S CAMP—
SO THAT'S WHAT TUKOJI SAYS, DOES HE? HE WILL LEARN...
WHAT'S THE NOISE OUTSIDE?
SARKAR, A MESSENGER HAS COME FROM AHILYABAI.
BRING HIM IN.
I HAVE BROUGHT A LETTER FOR YOUR HONOUR.

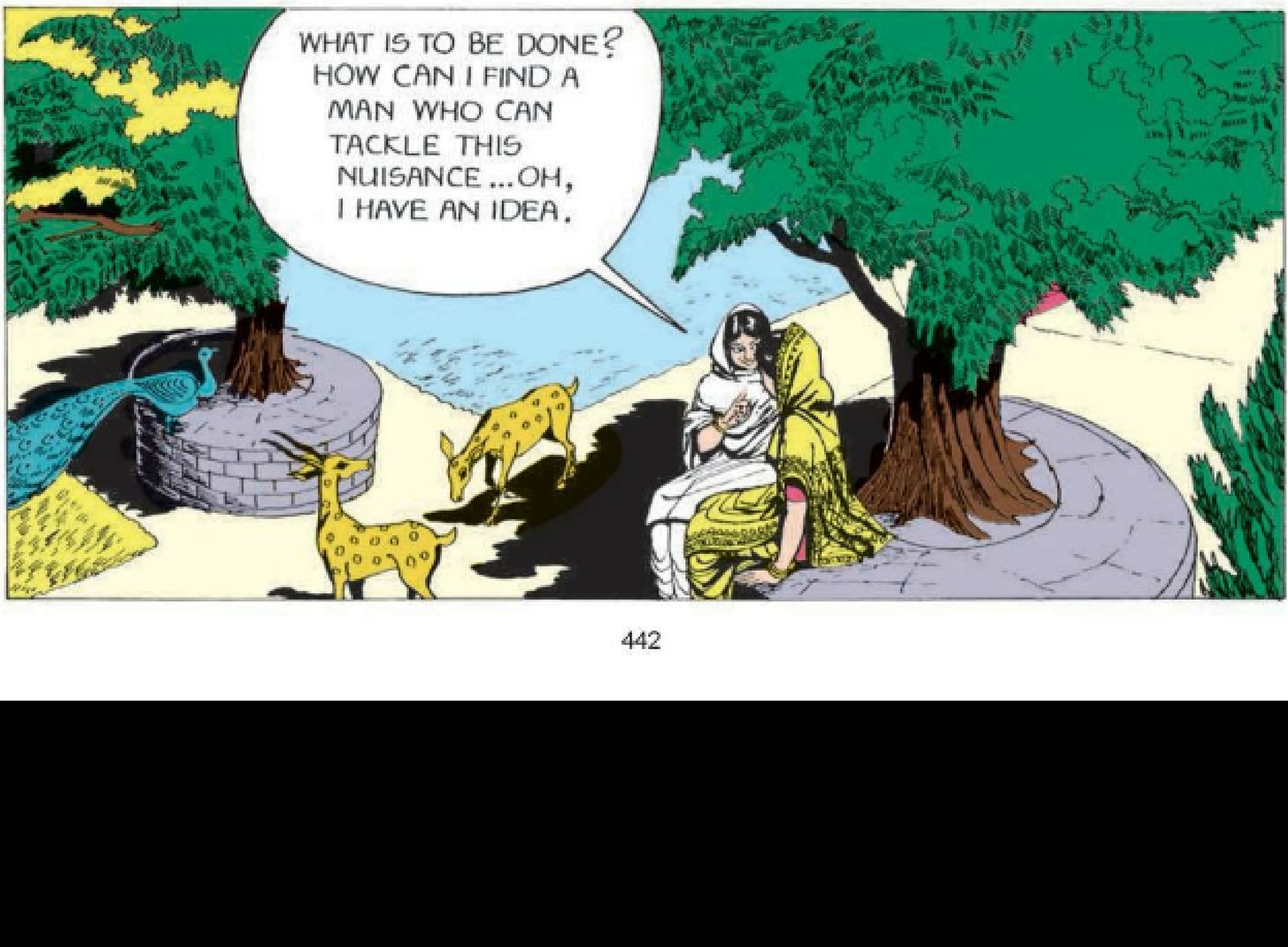

"...I AM PREPARED TO FIGHT YOUR ARMY. PLEASE REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT IF I LOSE, NOBODY WILL TAKE ANY NOTICE. BUT IF YOU LOSE AT THE HANDS OF A MERE WOMAN..., CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES..."
H'MM... I SEE!
NONSENSE! WHO TOLD AHILYADEVI WE HAVE COME TO FIGHT? GO TELL HER THAT WE HAVE COME TO PAY A VISIT BECAUSE OF HER SON'S DEATH.

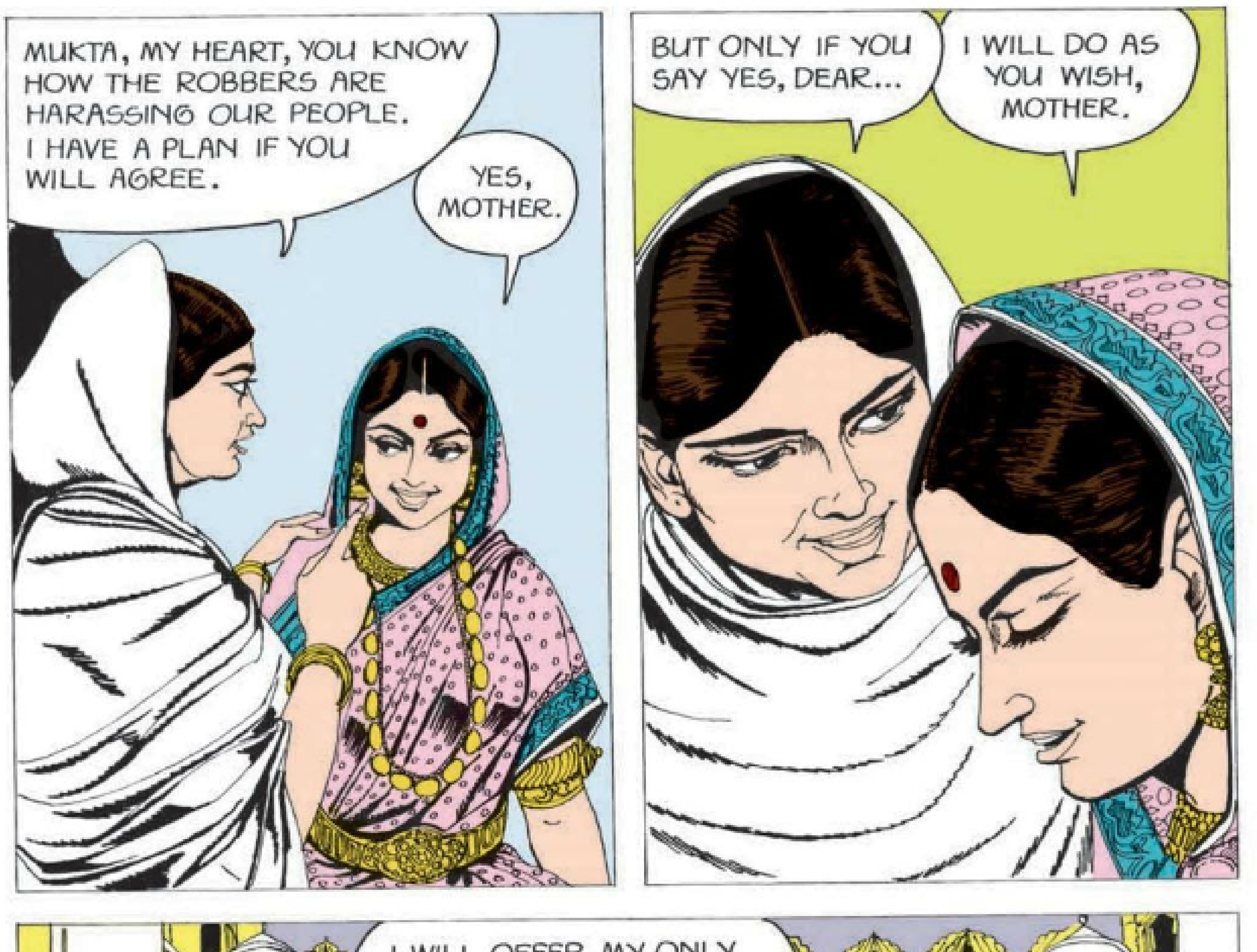

THE MESSENGER CAME BACK TO AHILYA'S COURT–
OH, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT IT WAS A PESHWA CUSTOM TO PAY A CONDOLENCE VISIT WITH A 50,000-STRONG ARMY.
AHILYA THUS DEFEATED RAGHOBA BY HER CLEVERNESS.

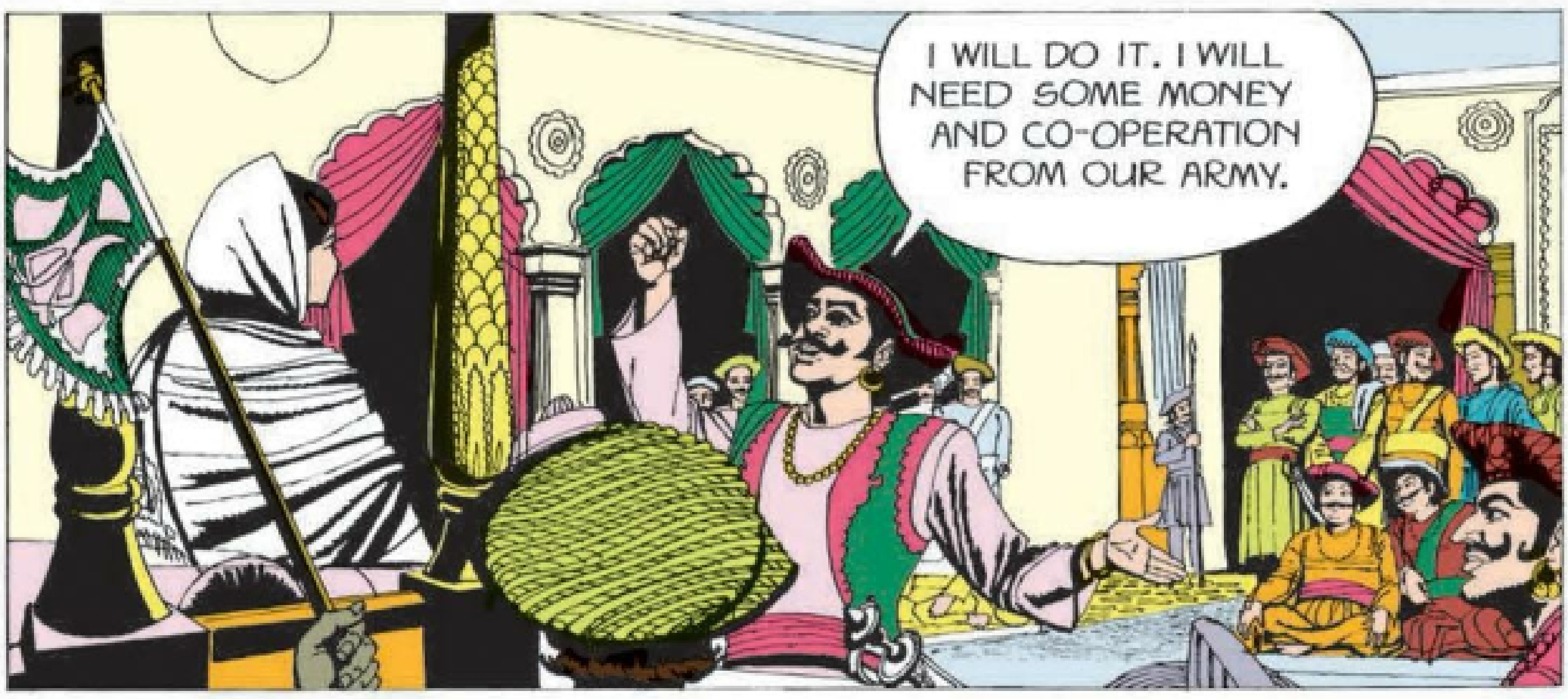

IN 1766, AHILYABAI SHIFTED HER CAPITAL FROM INDORE TO MAHESHWAR.
AHILYABAI BUILT AND RENOVATED MANY TEMPLES IN MAHESHWAR, STARTED SANSKRIT SCHOOLS, ENCOURAGED THE ANCIENT ART OF WEAVING, REVIVED THE FAMOUS MAHESHWARI SARIS...


WHILE PEACE REIGNED EVERYWHERE, THERE WERE MINOR DISTURBANCES.
THEY HAVE CUT AND TAKEN MY HARVEST AWAY IN ONE NIGHT!
ALL MY CASH WAS ROBBED WHILE I WAS TRAVELLING.

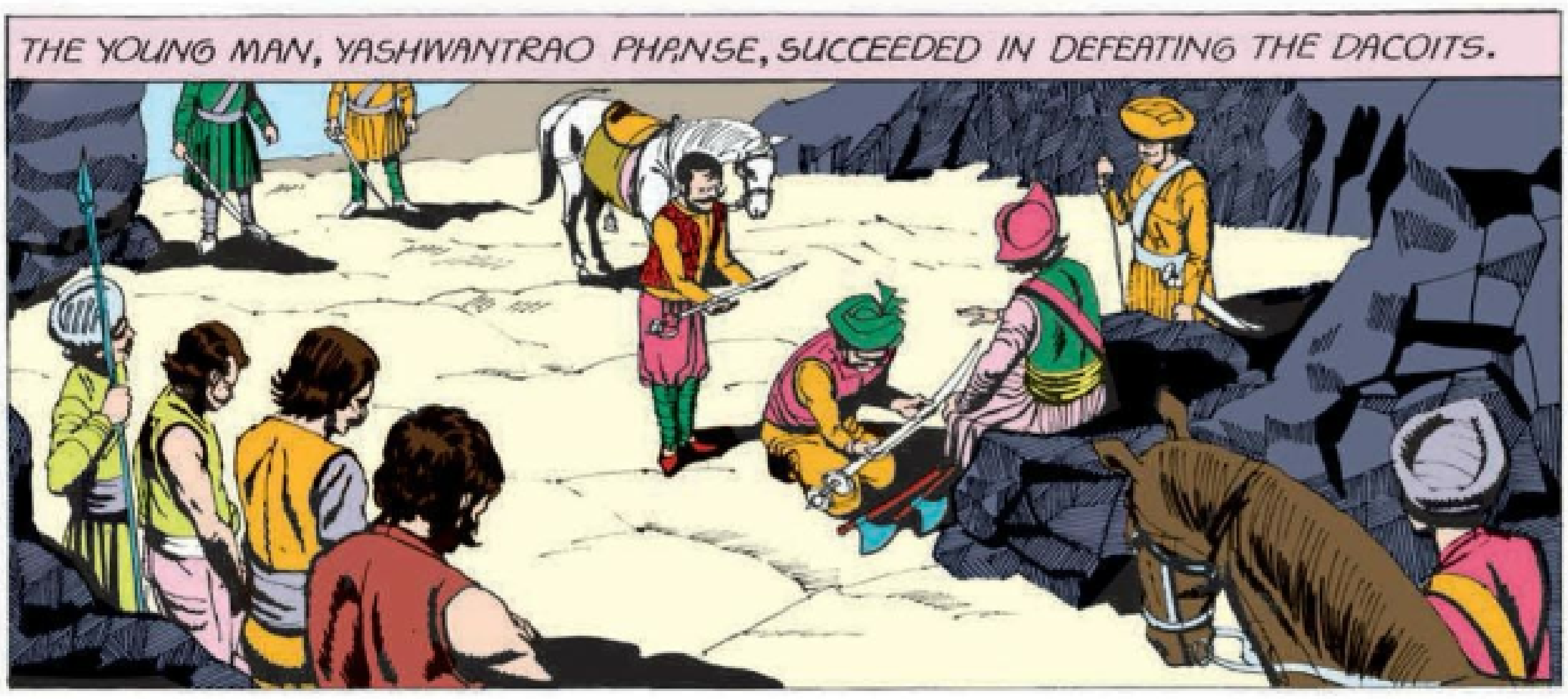

DACOITS WERE HARASSING PEOPLE. MANY COMPLAINTS WERE COMING IN EVERY DAY.


WHAT IS TO BE DONE? HOW CAN I FIND A MAN WHO CAN TACKLE THIS NUISANCE ... OH, I HAVE AN IDEA.

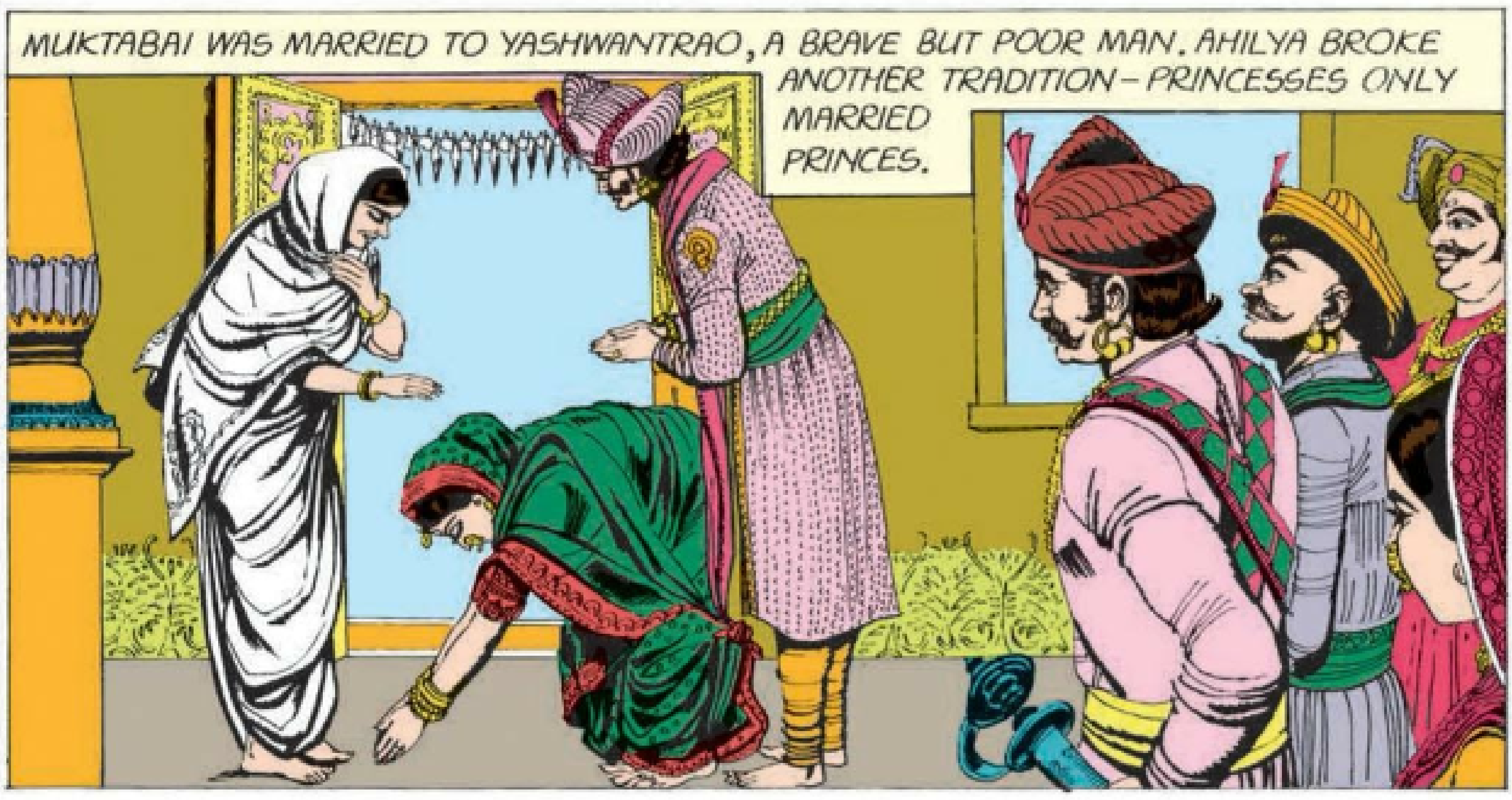

MUKTA, MY HEART, YOU KNOW HOW THE ROBBERS ARE HARASSING OUR PEOPLE. I HAVE A PLAN IF YOU WILL AGREE.
YES, MOTHER.
BUT ONLY IF YOU SAY YES, DEAR...
I WILL DO AS YOU WISH, MOTHER.
I WILL OFFER MY ONLY DAUGHTER MUKTABAI IN MARRIAGE TO WHOEVER CAN ROUND UP THE DACOITS.

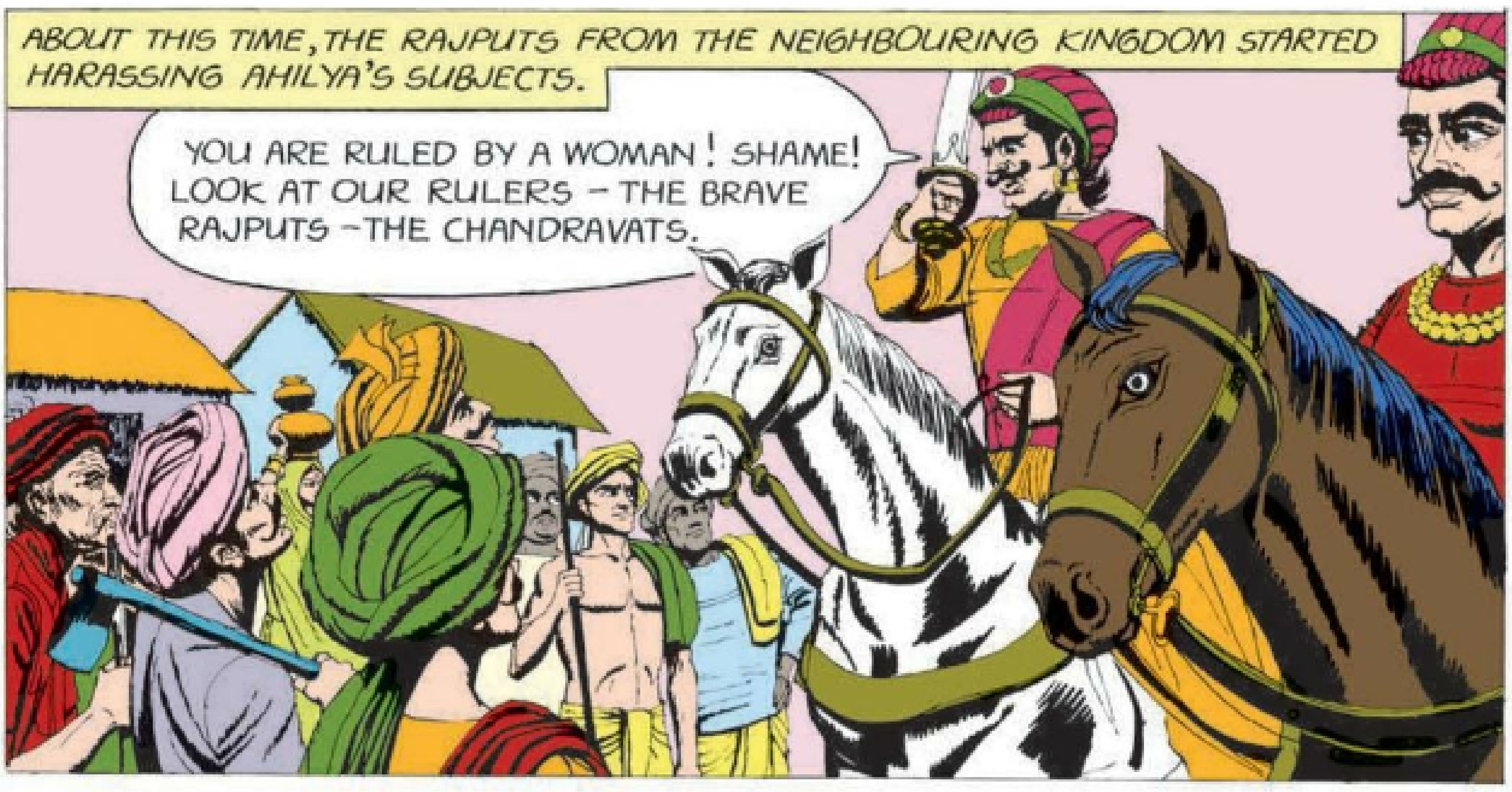

I WILL DO IT. I WILL NEED SOME MONEY AND CO-OPERATION FROM OUR ARMY.

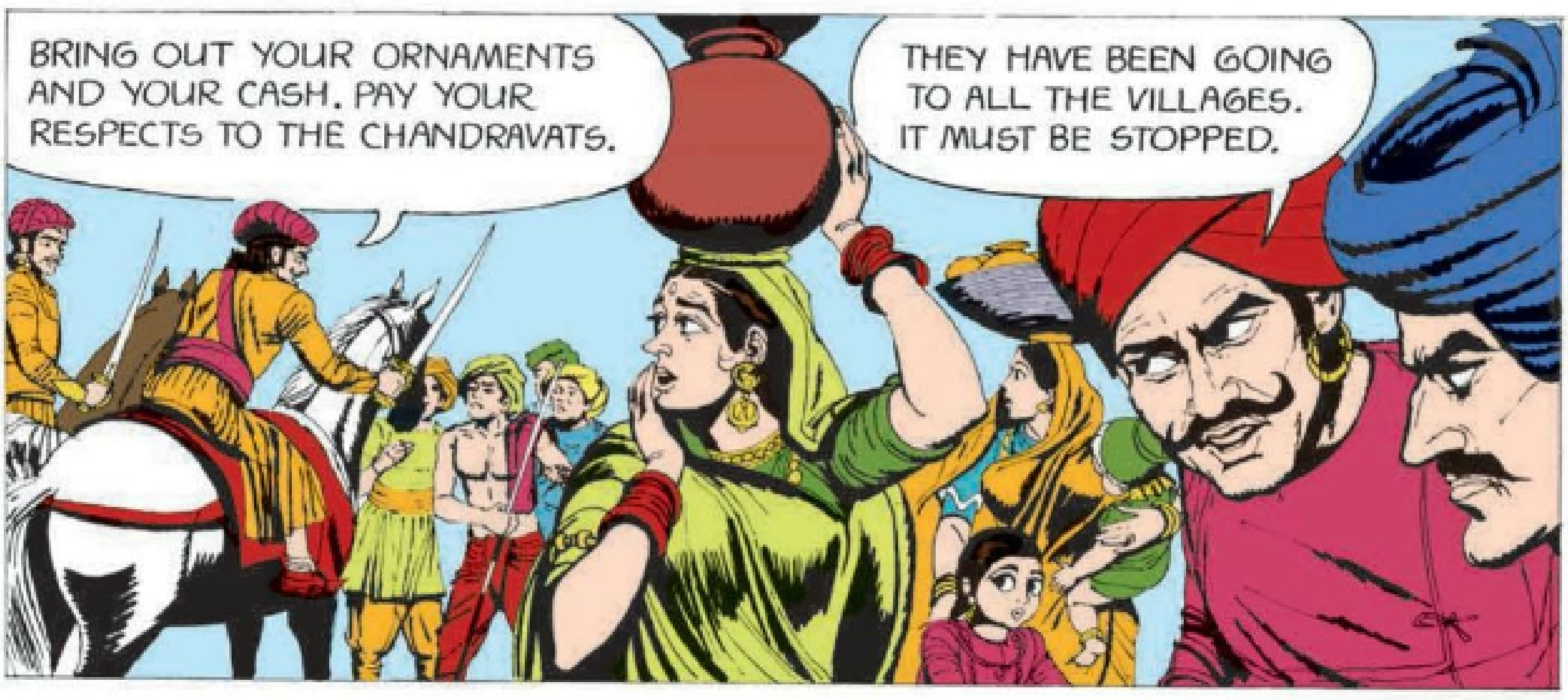
THE YOUNG MAN, YASHWANTRAO PHANSE, SUCCEEDED IN DEFEATING THE DACOITS.

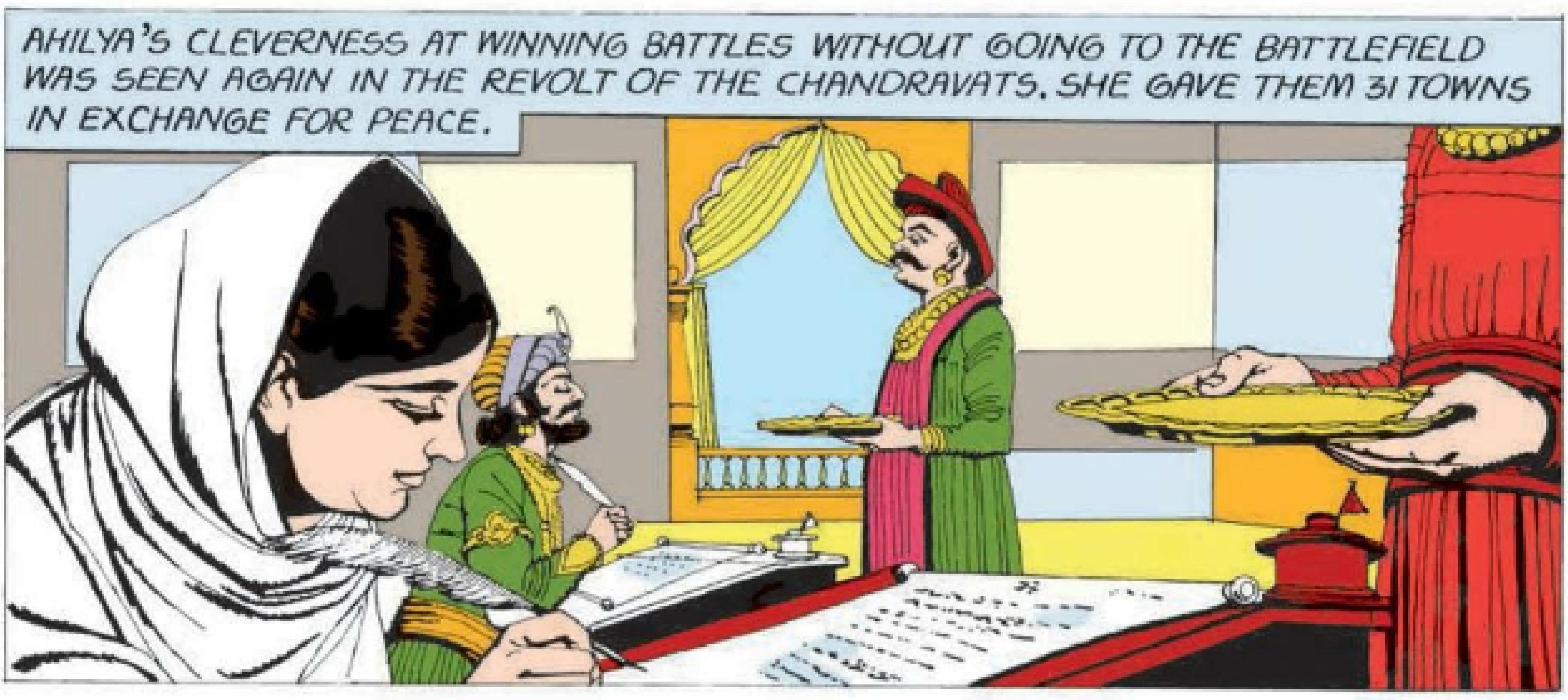


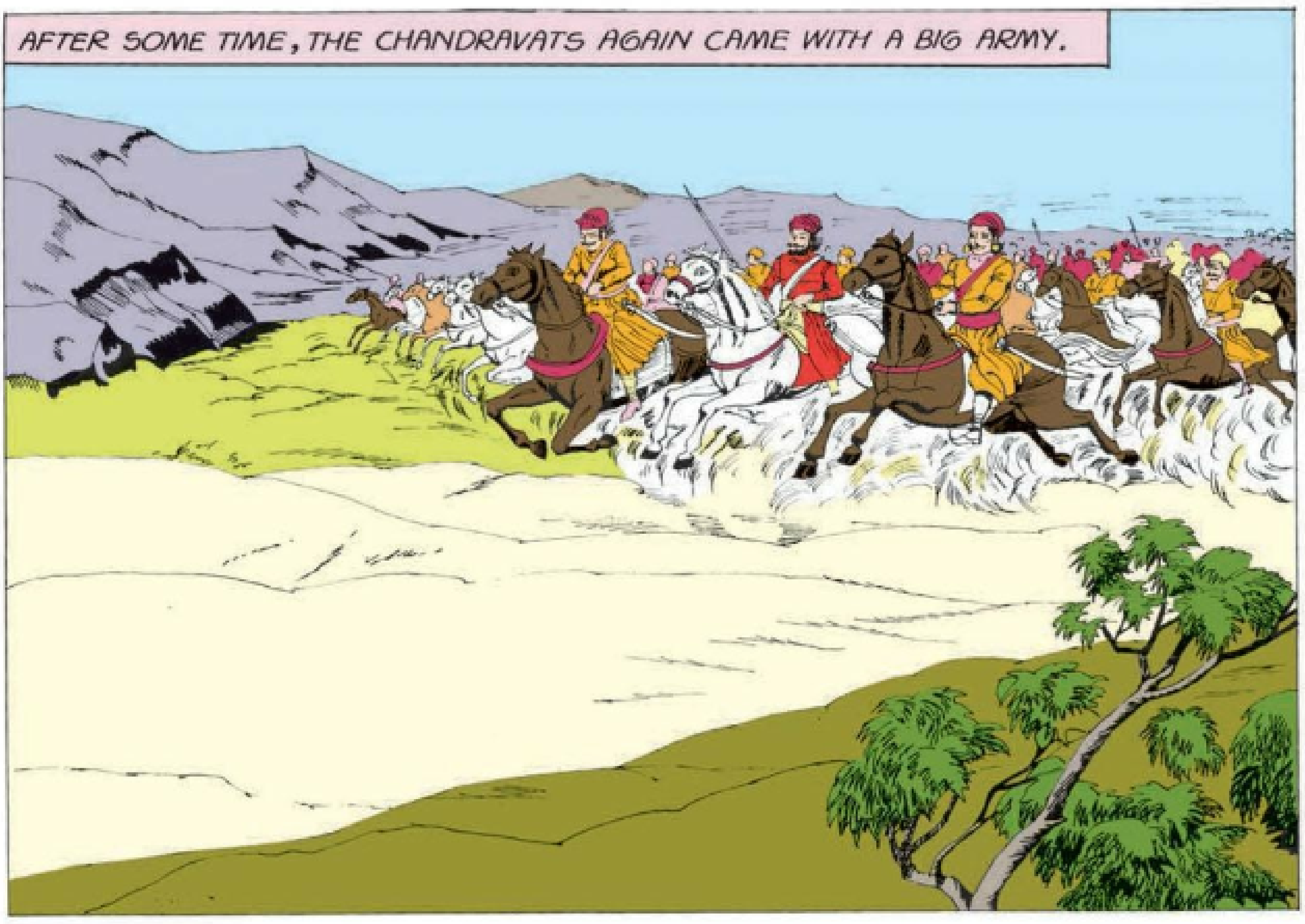
MUKTABAI WAS MARRIED TO YASHWANTRAO, A BRAVE BUT POOR MAN. AHILYA BROKE ANOTHER TRADITION – PRINCESSES ONLY MARRIED PRINCES.



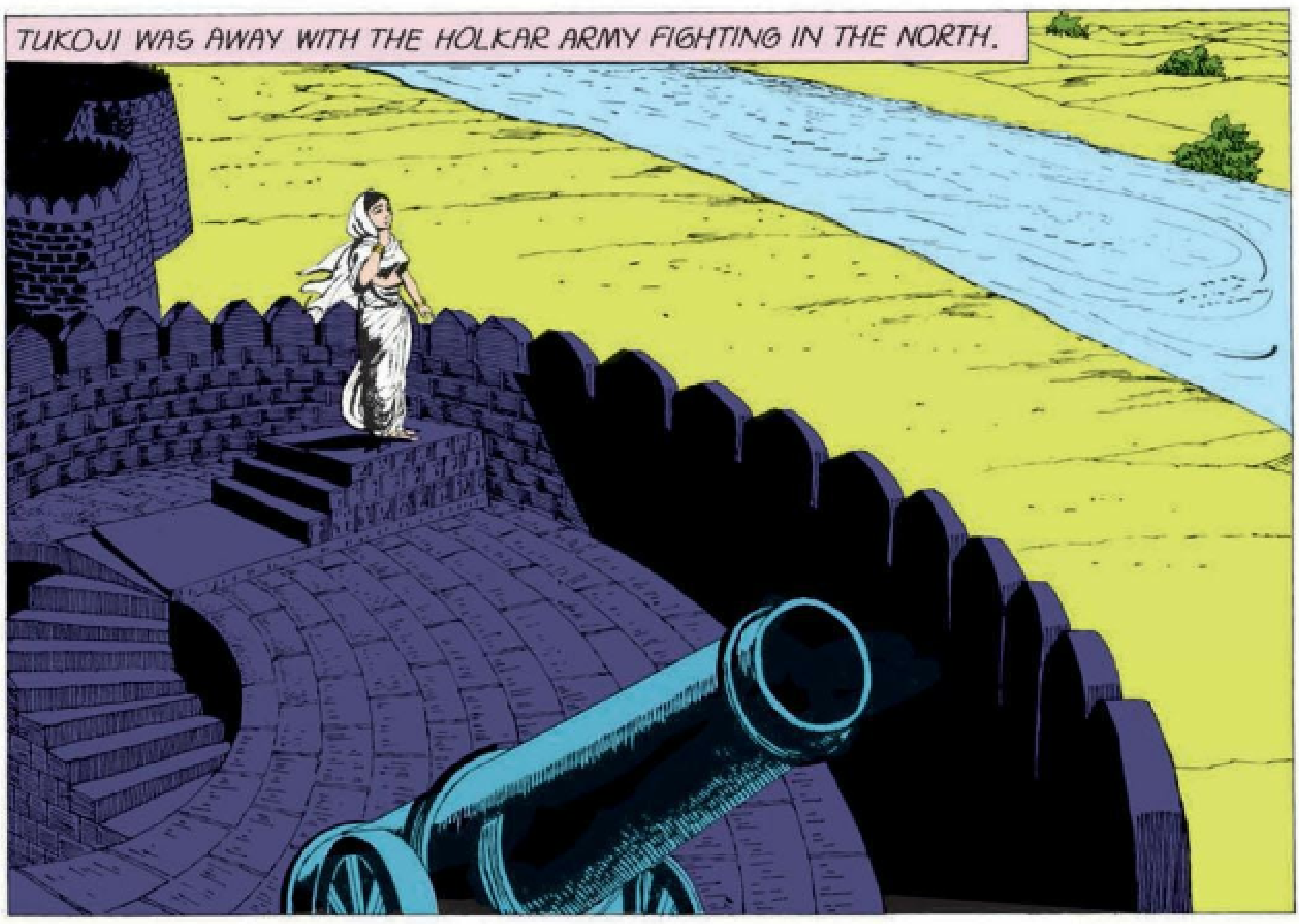

ABOUT THIS TIME, THE RAJPUTS FROM THE NEIGHBOURING KINGDOM STARTED HARASSING AHILYA'S SUBJECTS.
YOU ARE RULED BY A WOMAN ! SHAME! LOOK AT OUR RULERS – THE BRAVE RAJPUTS – THE CHANDRAVATS.


BRING OUT YOUR ORNAMENTS AND YOUR CASH. PAY YOUR RESPECTS TO THE CHANDRAVATS.
THEY HAVE BEEN GOING TO ALL THE VILLAGES. IT MUST BE STOPPED.

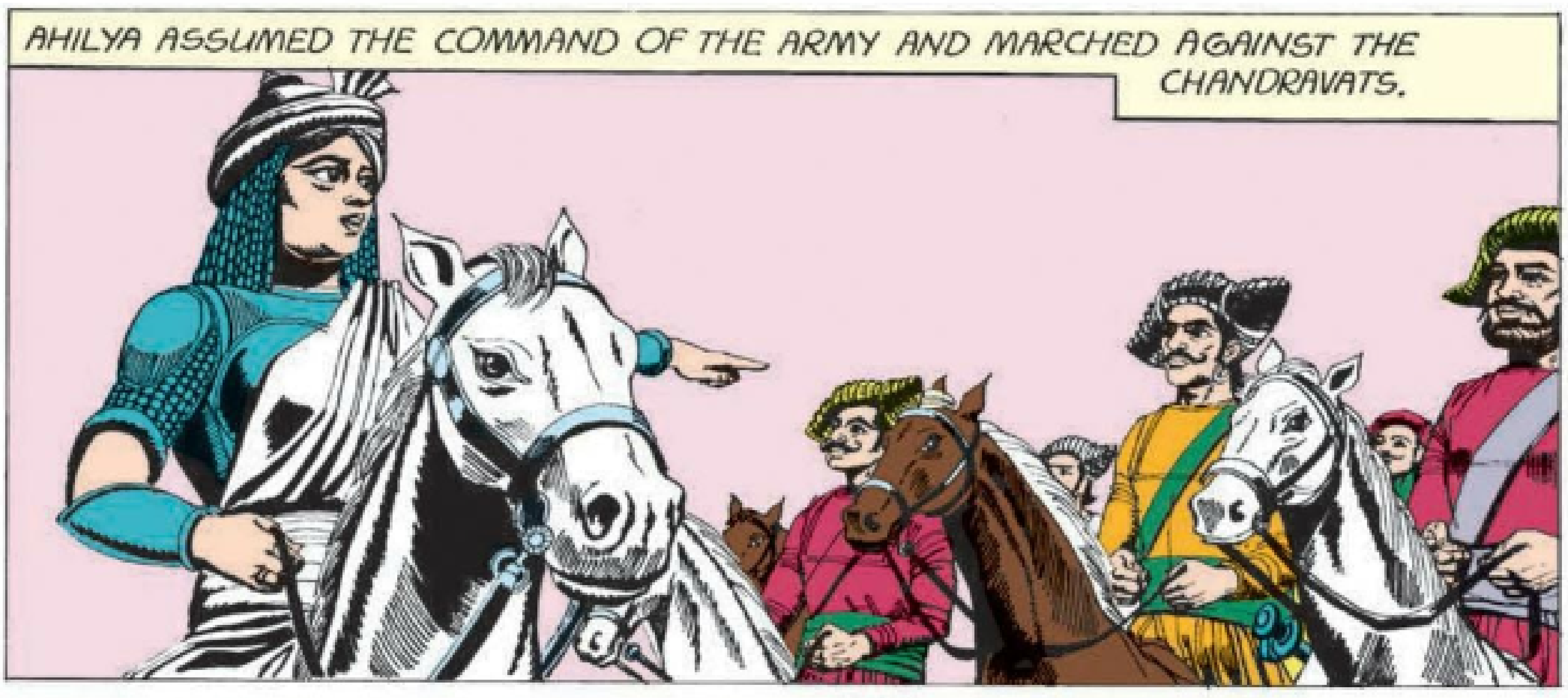

AHILYA'S CLEVERNESS AT WINNING BATTLES WITHOUT GOING TO THE BATTLEFIELD WAS SEEN AGAIN IN THE REVOLT OF THE CHANDRAVATS. SHE GAVE THEM 31 TOWNS IN EXCHANGE FOR PEACE.



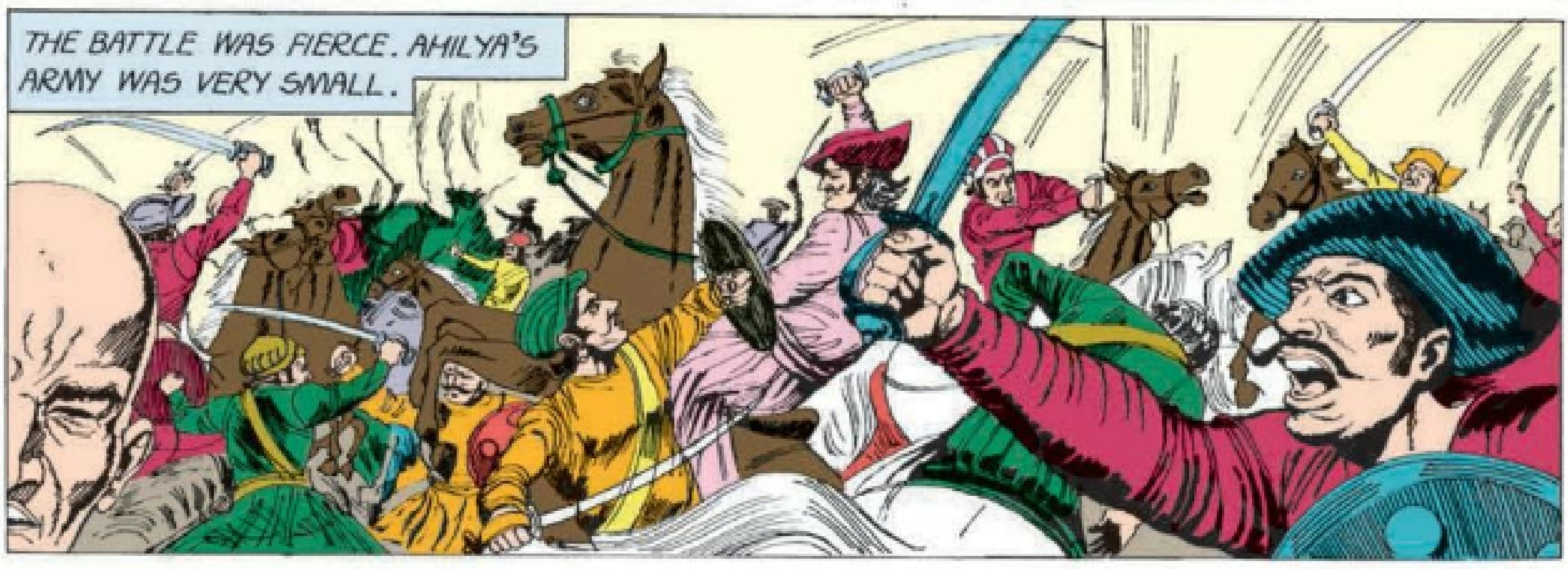
AFTER SOME TIME, THE CHANDRAVATS AGAIN CAME WITH A BIG ARMY.



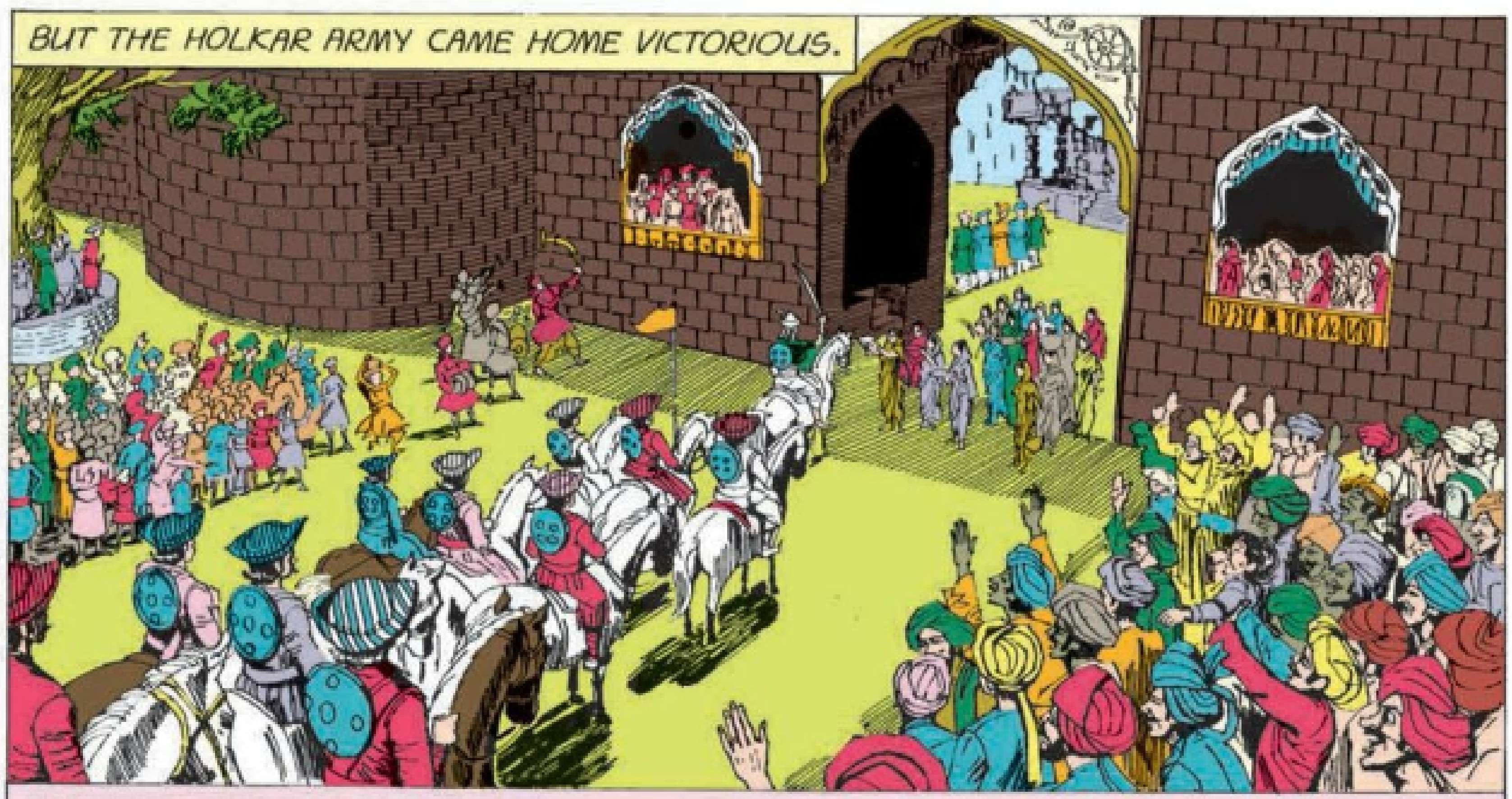
TUKOJI WAS AWAY WITH THE HOLKAR ARMY FIGHTING IN THE NORTH.



AHILYA ASSUMED THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY AND MARCHED AGAINST THE CHANDRAVATS.



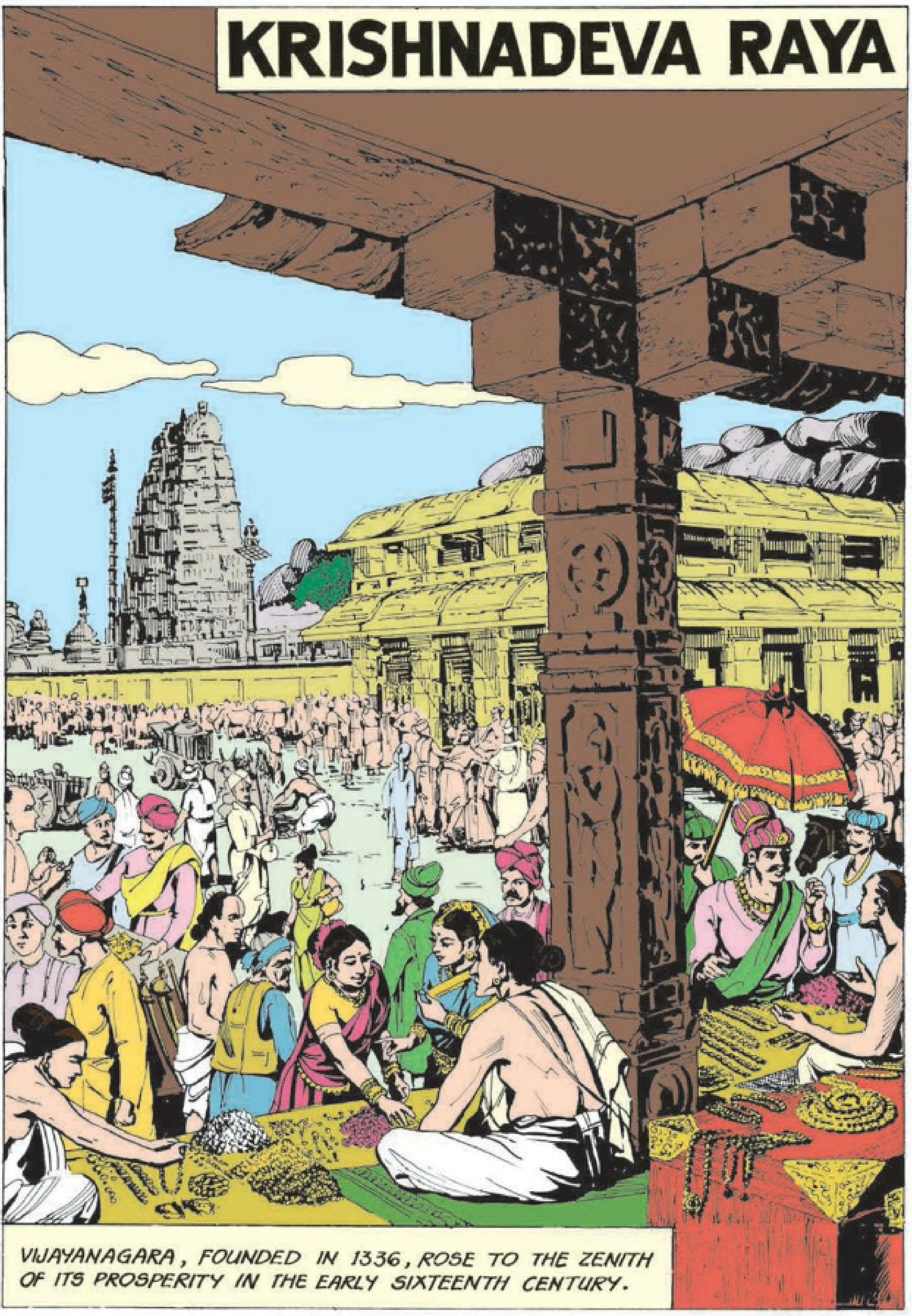
THE BATTLE WAS FIERCE. AHILYA'S ARMY WAS VERY SMALL.



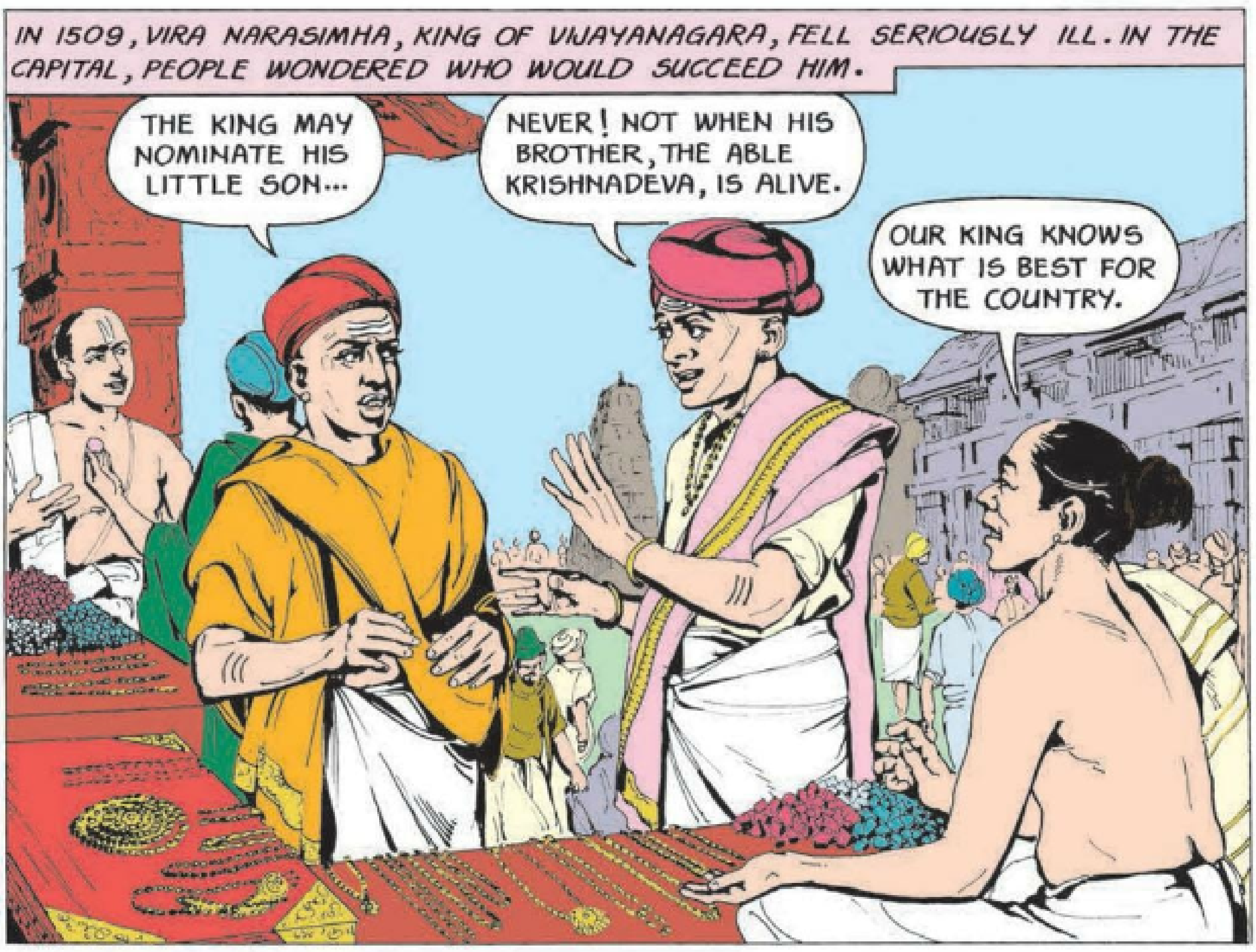
BUT THE HOLKAR ARMY CAME HOME VICTORIOUS.

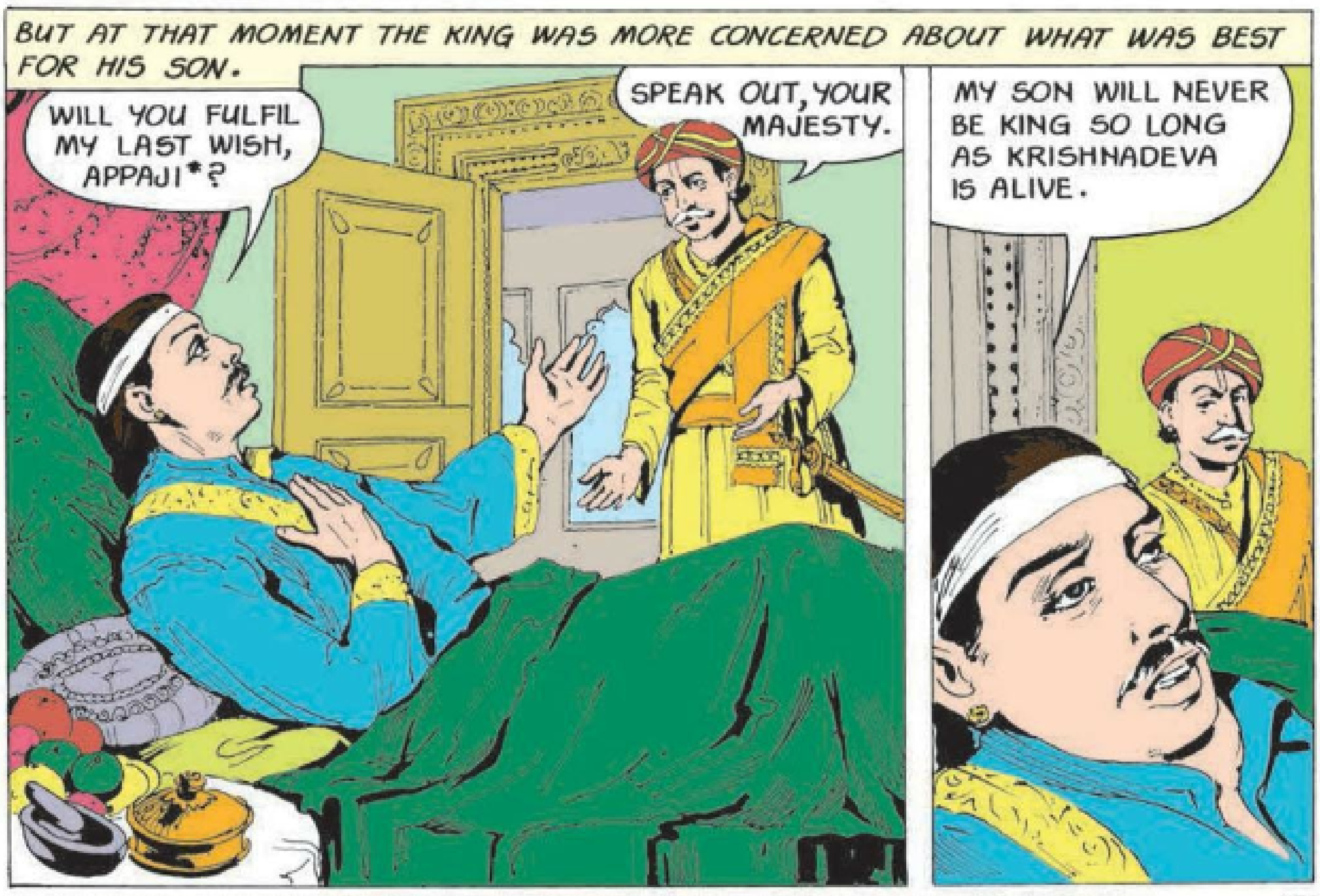
AHILYABAI LIVED TO A RIPE OLD AGE. HER WORK IS REMEMBERED TO THIS DAY. IN MANY PARTS OF INDIA, YOU WILL FIND MONUMENTS TO AHILYA'S GENEROSITY AND PIOUSNESS.

KRISHNADEVA RAYA

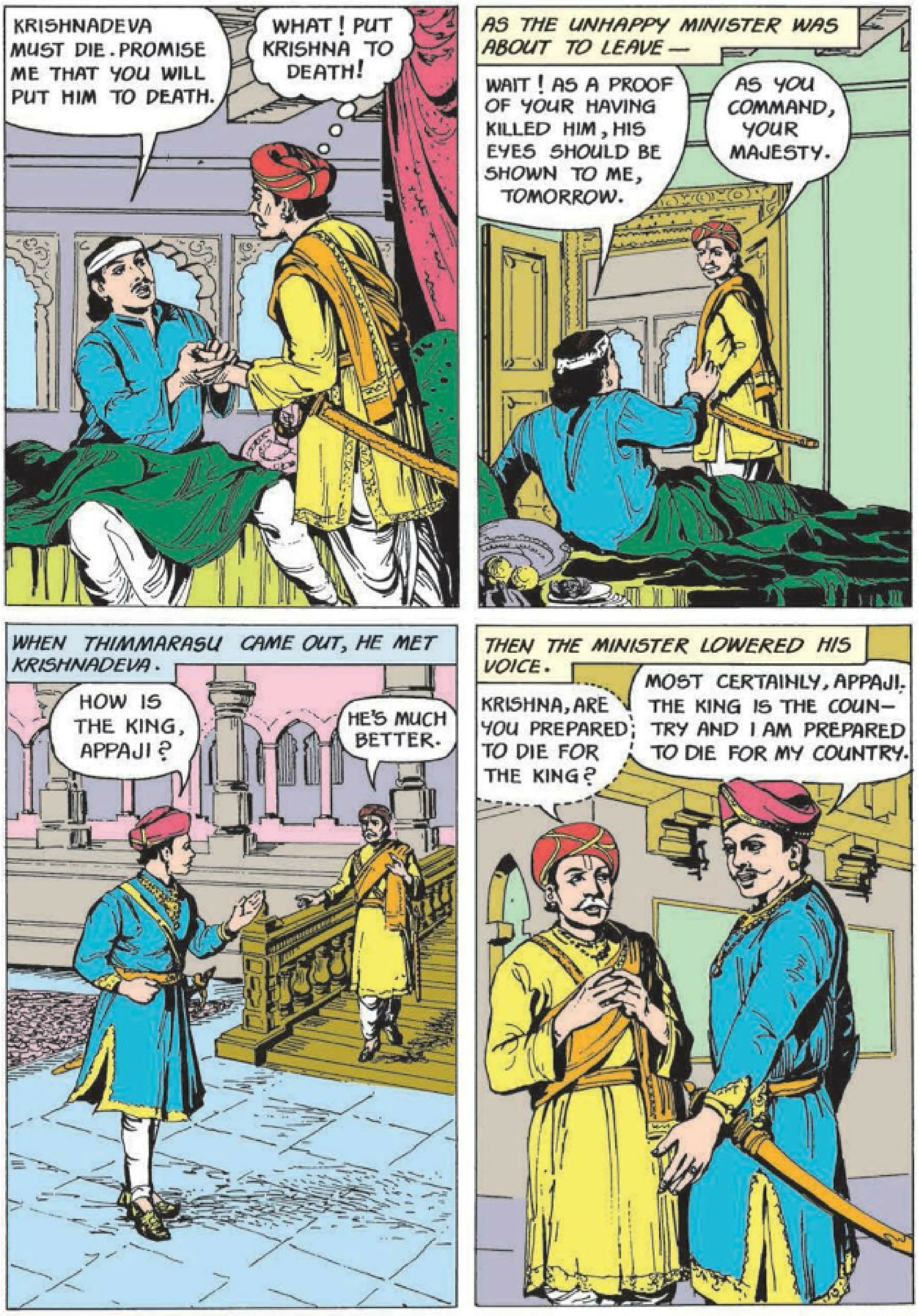


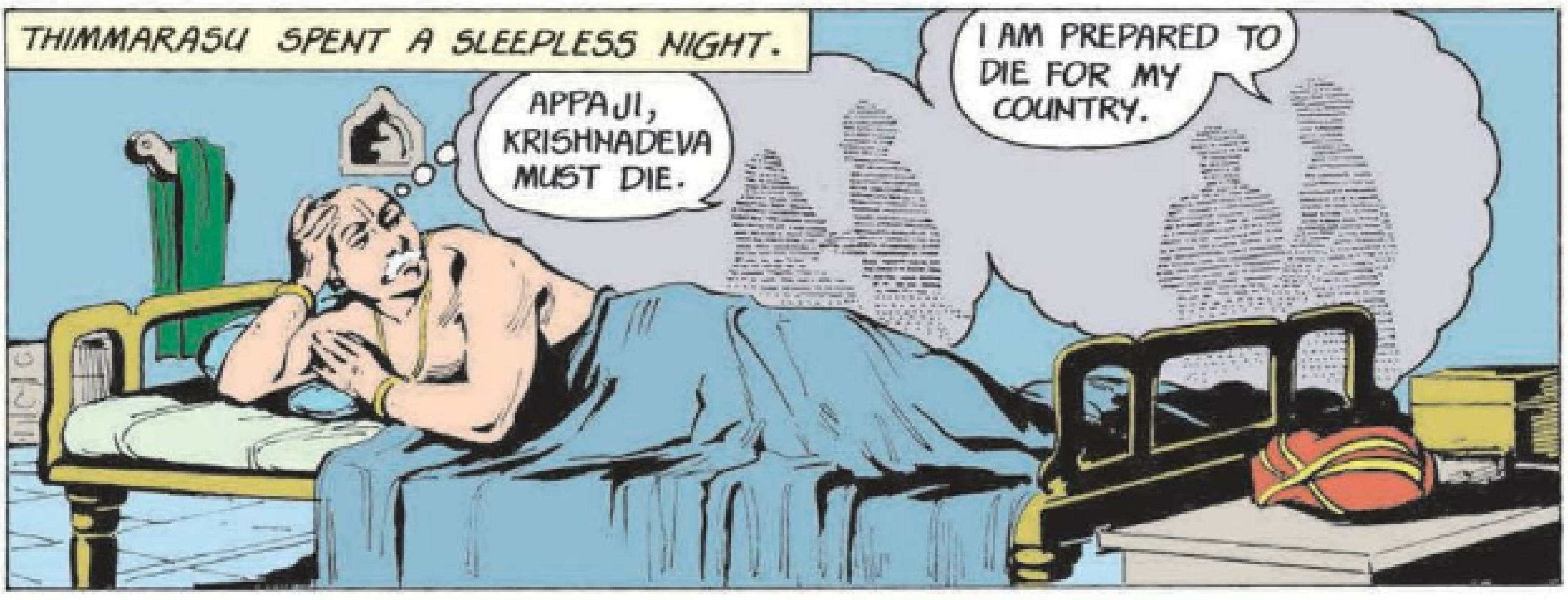
VIJAYANAGARA, FOUNDED IN 1336, ROSE TO THE ZENITH OF ITS PROSPERITY IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

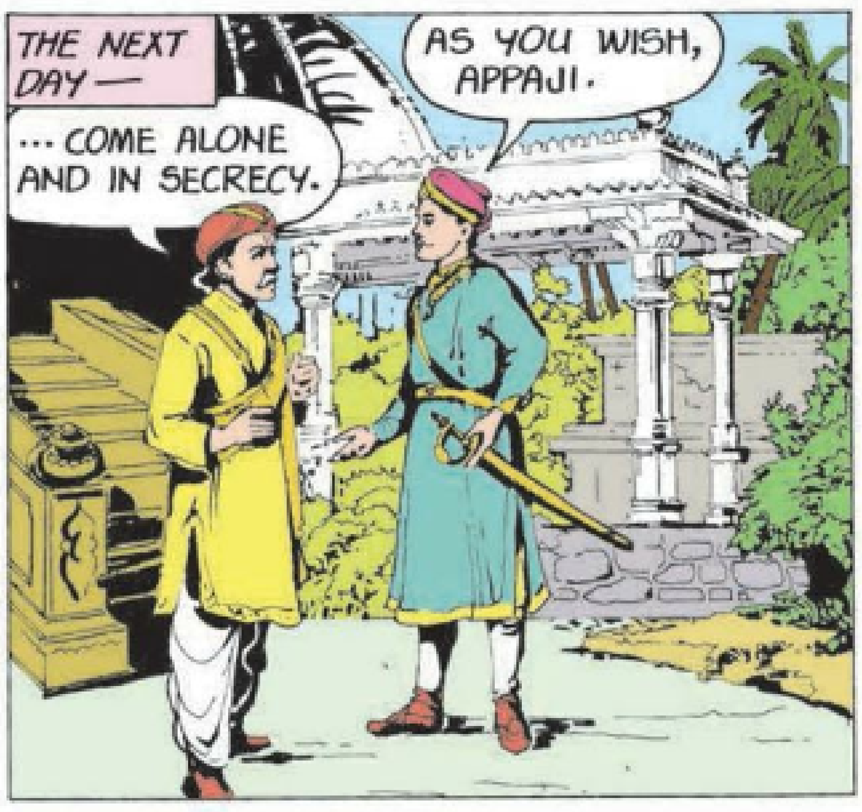

IN 1509, VIRA NARASIMHA, KING OF VIJAYANAGARA, FELL SERIOUSLY ILL. IN THE CAPITAL, PEOPLE WONDERED WHO WOULD SUCCEED HIM.
THE KING MAY NOMINATE HIS LITTLE SON...
NEVER! NOT WHEN HIS BROTHER, THE ABLE KRISHNADEVA, IS ALIVE.
OUR KING KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR THE COUNTRY.

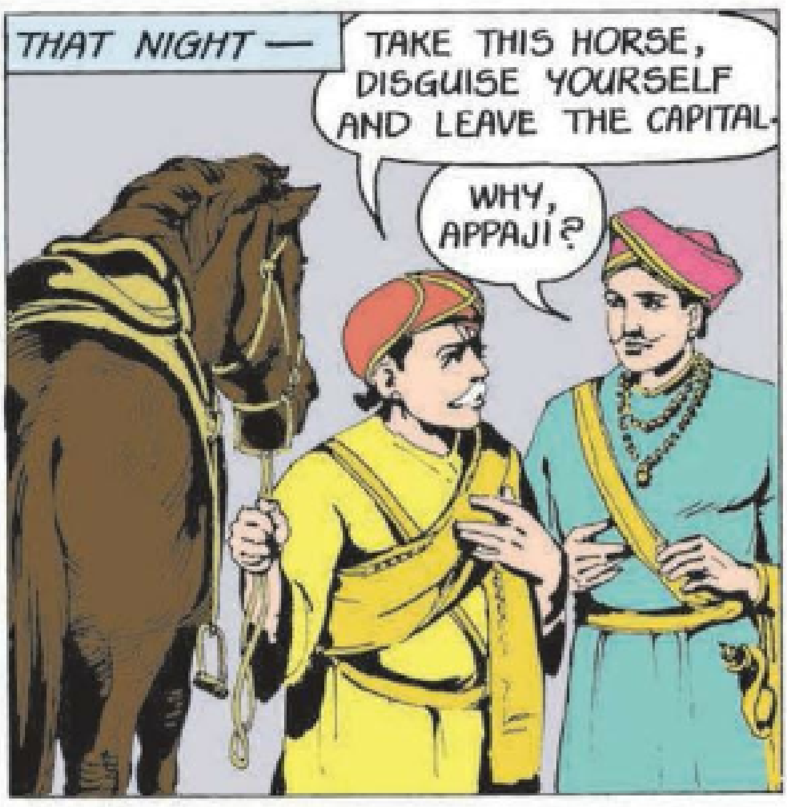

BUT AT THAT MOMENT THE KING WAS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT WAS BEST FOR HIS SON.
WILL YOU FULFIL MY LAST WISH, APPAJI*?
SPEAK OUT, YOUR MAJESTY.
MY SON WILL NEVER BE KING SO LONG AS KRISHNADEVA IS ALIVE.

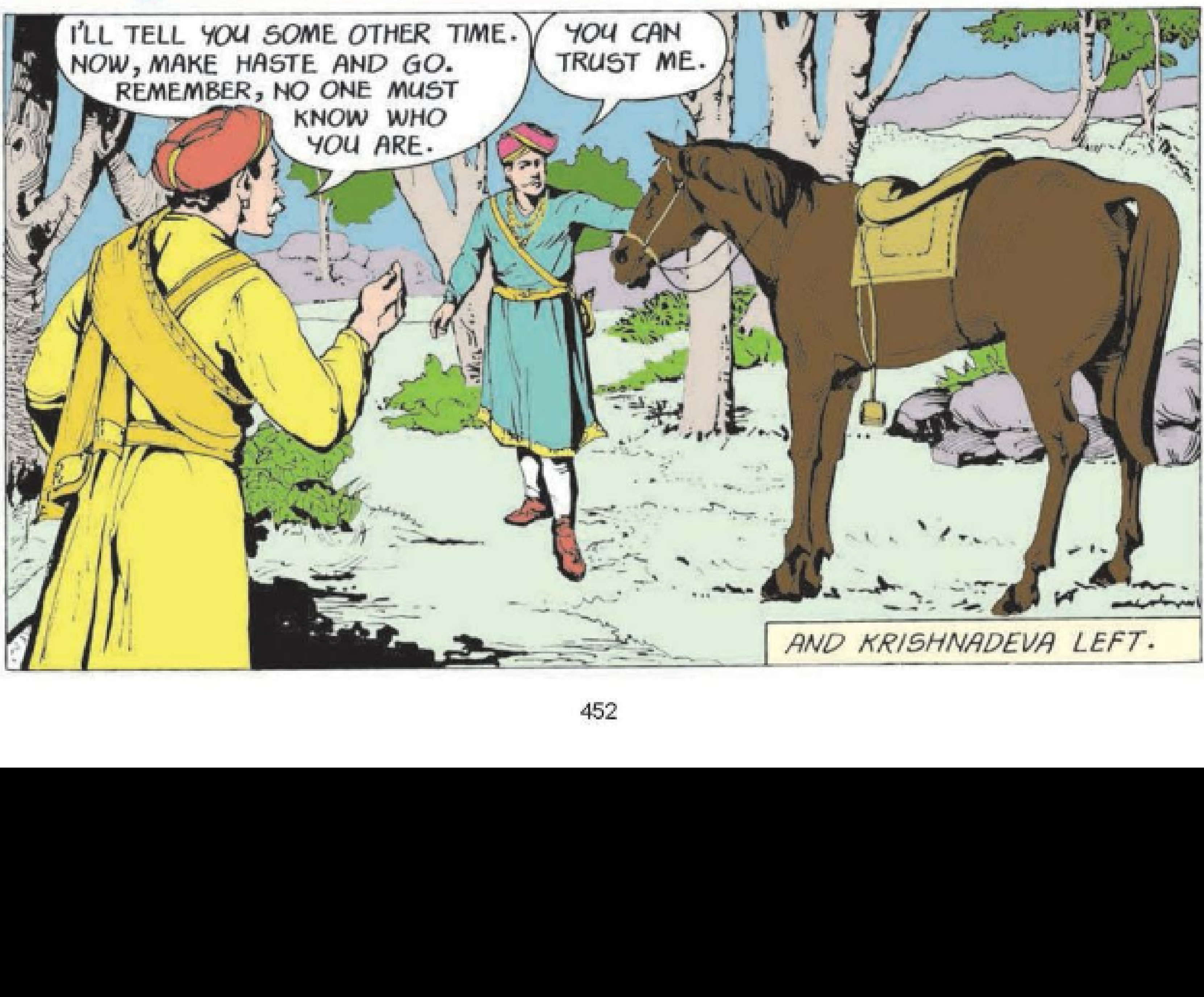
*MINISTER THIMMARASU WAS AFFECTIONATELY ADDRESSED AS APPAJI.

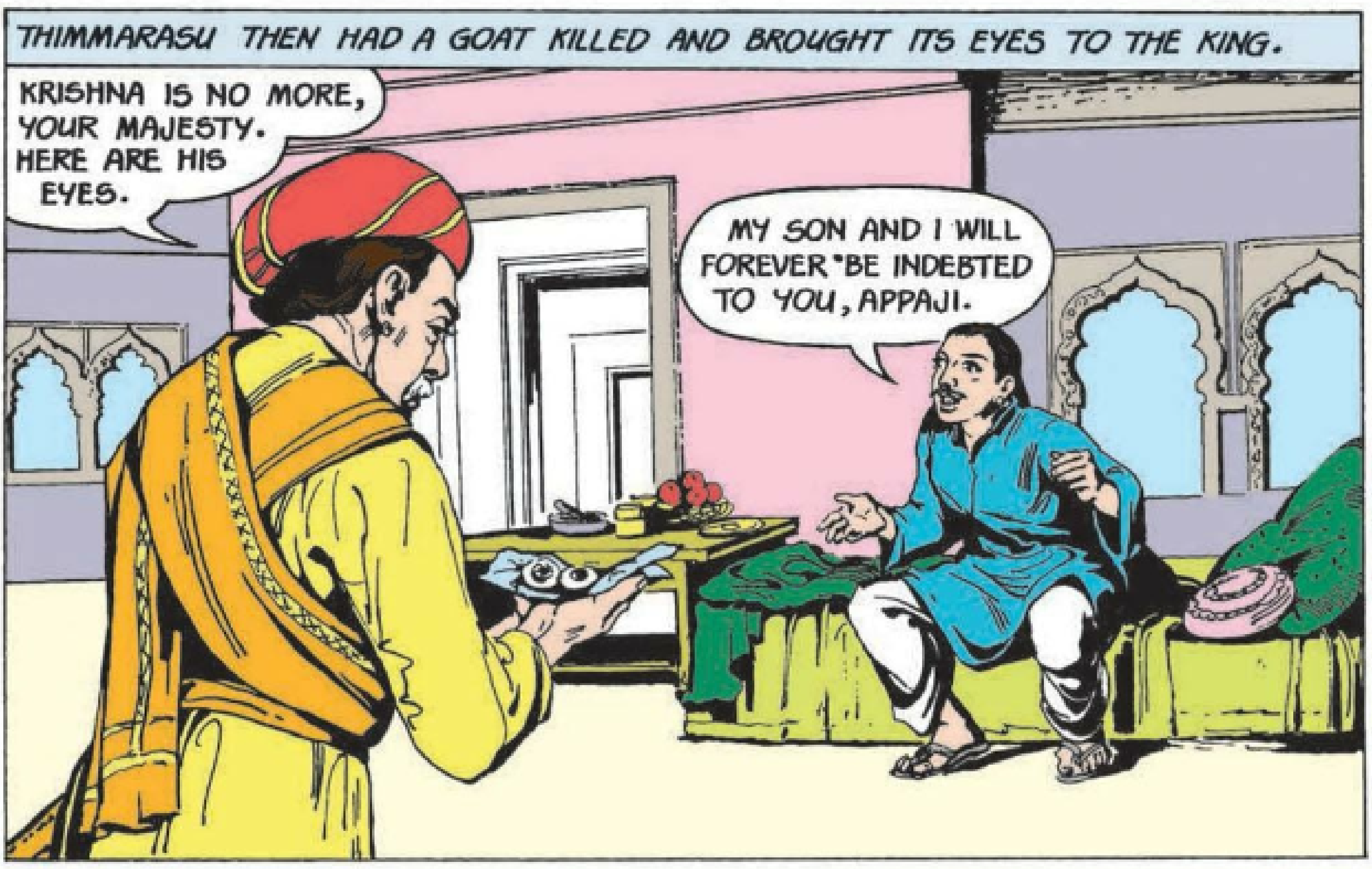

KRISHNADEVA MUST DIE. PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL PUT HIM TO DEATH.
WHAT! PUT KRISHNA TO DEATH!
AS THE UNHAPPY MINISTER WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE—
WAIT! AS A PROOF OF YOUR HAVING KILLED HIM, HIS EYES SHOULD BE SHOWN TO ME, TOMORROW.
AS YOU COMMAND, YOUR MAJESTY.
WHEN THIMMARASU CAME OUT, HE MET KRISHNADEVA.
HOW IS THE KING, APPAJI?
HE'S MUCH BETTER.
THEN THE MINISTER LOWERED HIS VOICE.
KRISHNA, ARE YOU PREPARED TO DIE FOR THE KING?
MOST CERTAINLY, APPAJI. THE KING IS THE COUNTRY AND I AM PREPARED TO DIE FOR MY COUNTRY.

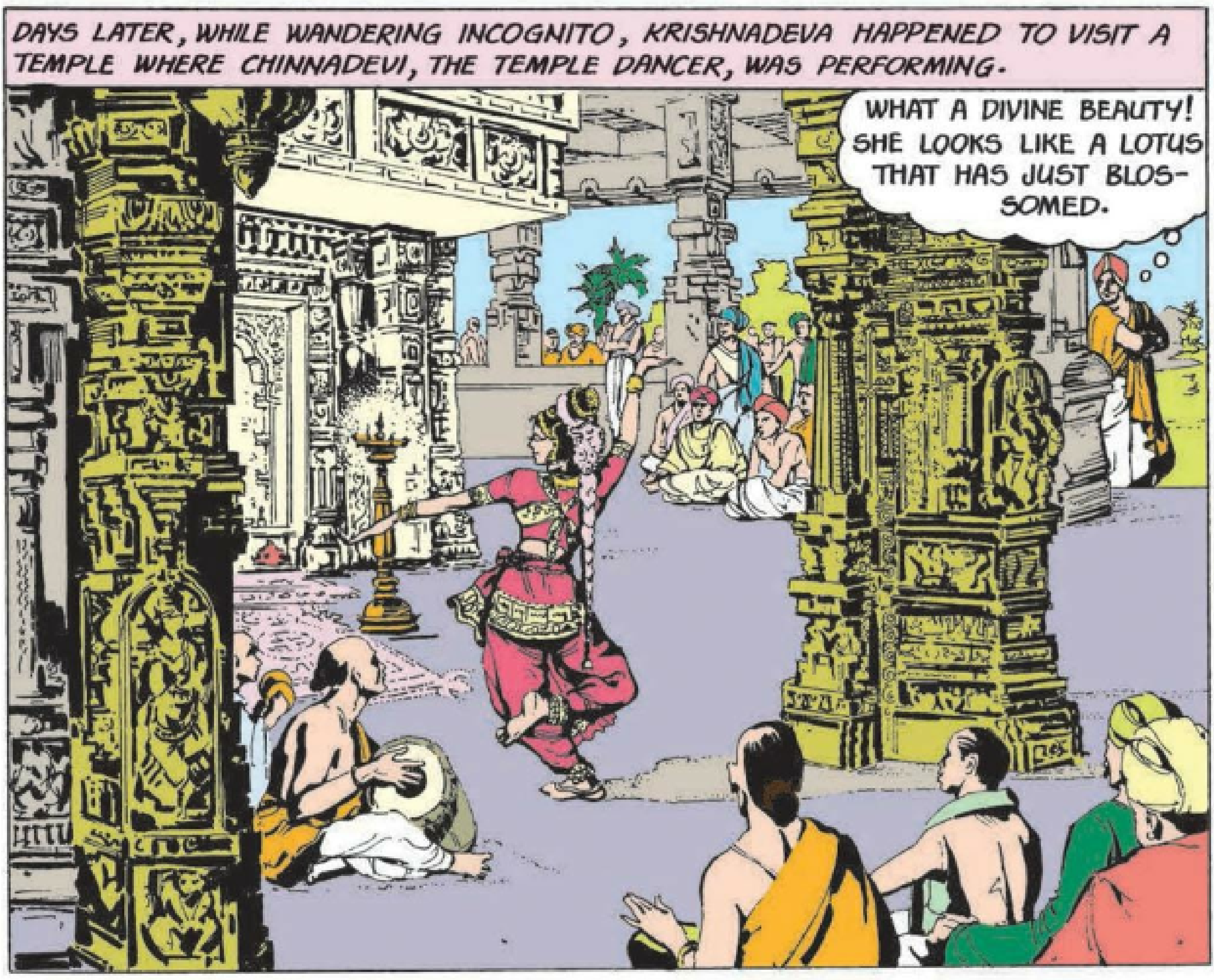

THIMMARASU SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT.
APPAJI, KRISHNADEVA MUST DIE.
I AM PREPARED TO DIE FOR MY COUNTRY.

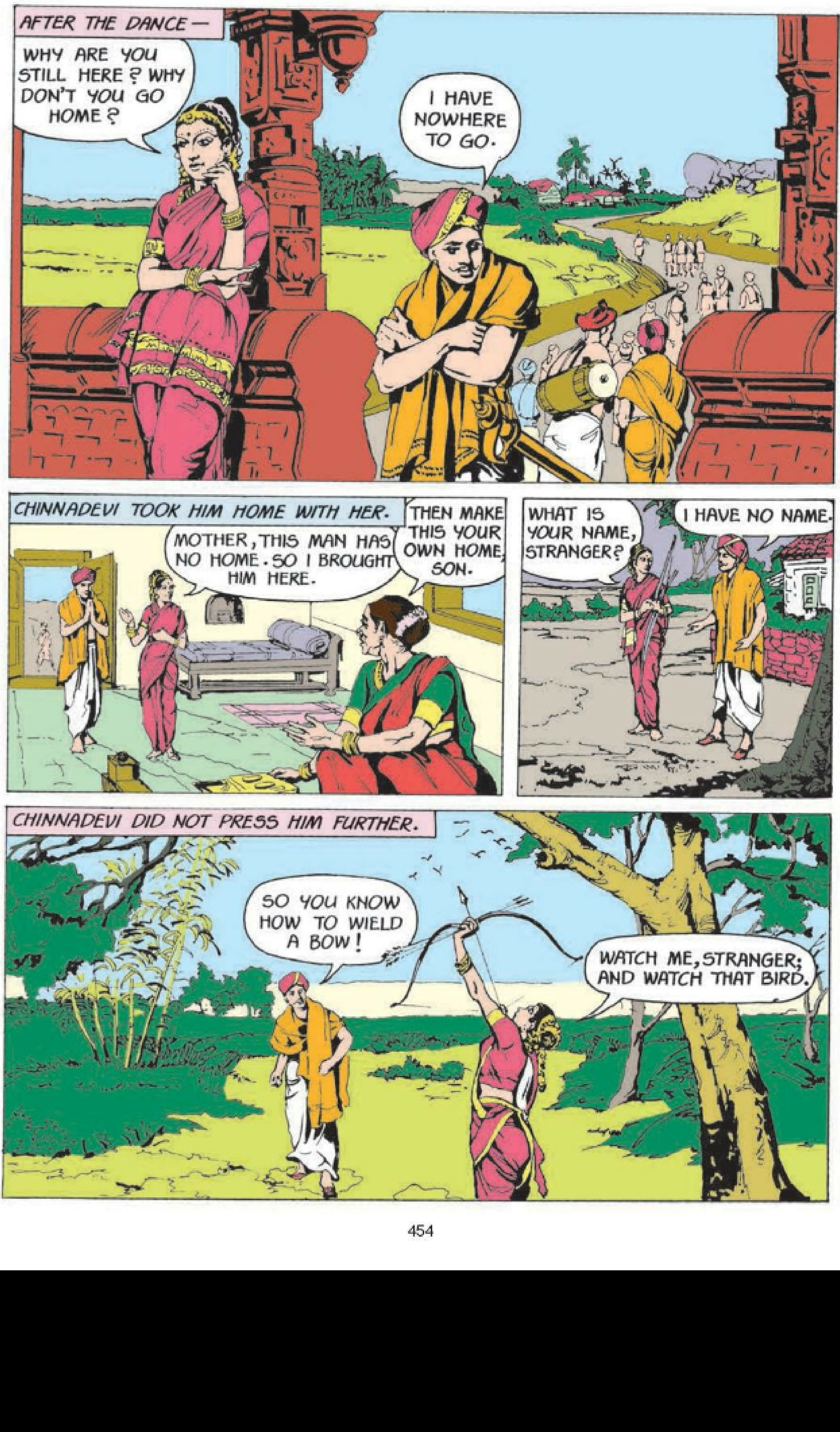

THE NEXT DAY —
... COME ALONE AND IN SECRECY.
AS YOU WISH, APPAJI.


THAT NIGHT —
TAKE THIS HORSE, DISGUISE YOURSELF AND LEAVE THE CAPITAL.
WHY, APPAJI?

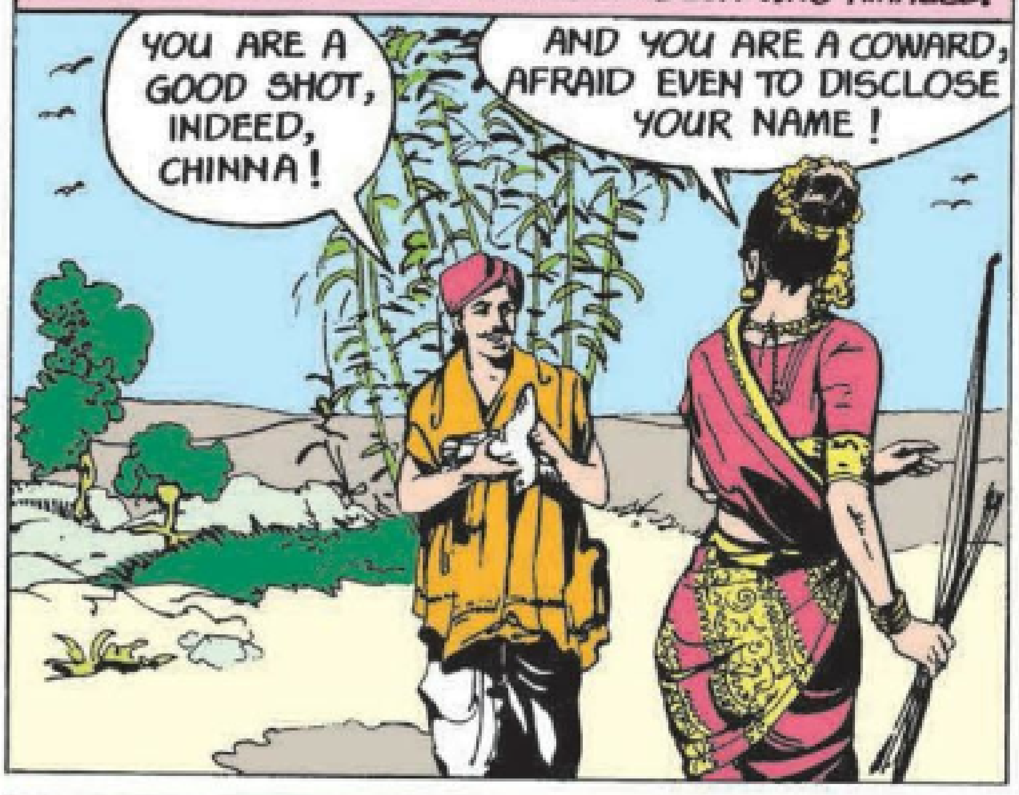

I'LL TELL YOU SOME OTHER TIME. NOW, MAKE HASTE AND GO. REMEMBER, NO ONE MUST KNOW WHO YOU ARE.
YOU CAN TRUST ME.
AND KRISHNADEVA LEFT.


THIMMARASU THEN HAD A GOAT KILLED AND BROUGHT ITS EYES TO THE KING.
KRISHNA IS NO MORE, YOUR MAJESTY. HERE ARE HIS EYES.
MY SON AND I WILL FOREVER BE INDEBTED TO YOU, APPAJI.

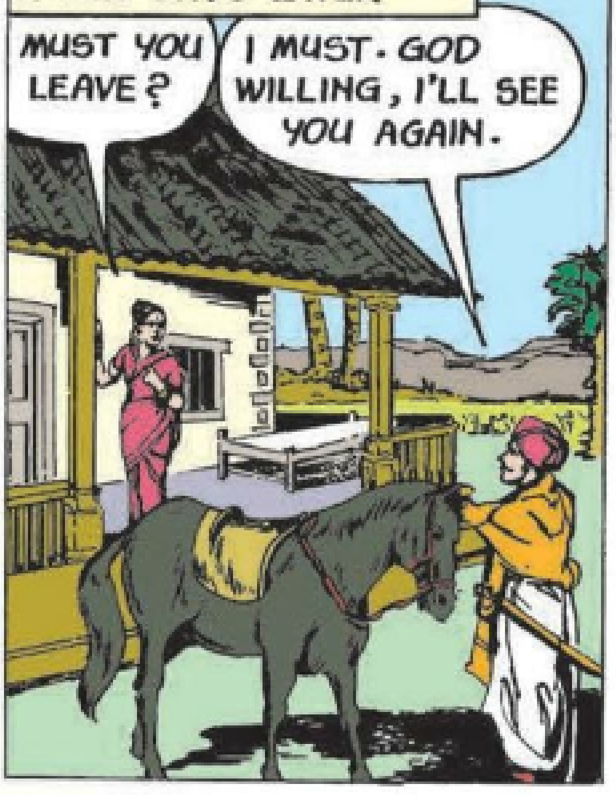

DAYS LATER, WHILE WANDERING INCOGNITO, KRISHNADEVA HAPPENED TO VISIT A TEMPLE WHERE CHINNADEVI, THE TEMPLE DANCER, WAS PERFORMING.
WHAT A DIVINE BEAUTY! SHE LOOKS LIKE A LOTUS THAT HAS JUST BLOSSOMED.


AFTER THE DANCE —
WHY ARE YOU STILL HERE? WHY DON'T YOU GO HOME?
I HAVE NOWHERE TO GO.
CHINNADEVI TOOK HIM HOME WITH HER.
MOTHER, THIS MAN HAS NO HOME. SO I BROUGHT HIM HERE.
THEN MAKE THIS YOUR OWN HOME, SON.
WHAT IS YOUR NAME, STRANGER?
I HAVE NO NAME.
CHINNADEVI DID NOT PRESS HIM FURTHER.
SO YOU KNOW HOW TO WIELD A BOW!
WATCH ME, STRANGER; AND WATCH THAT BIRD.

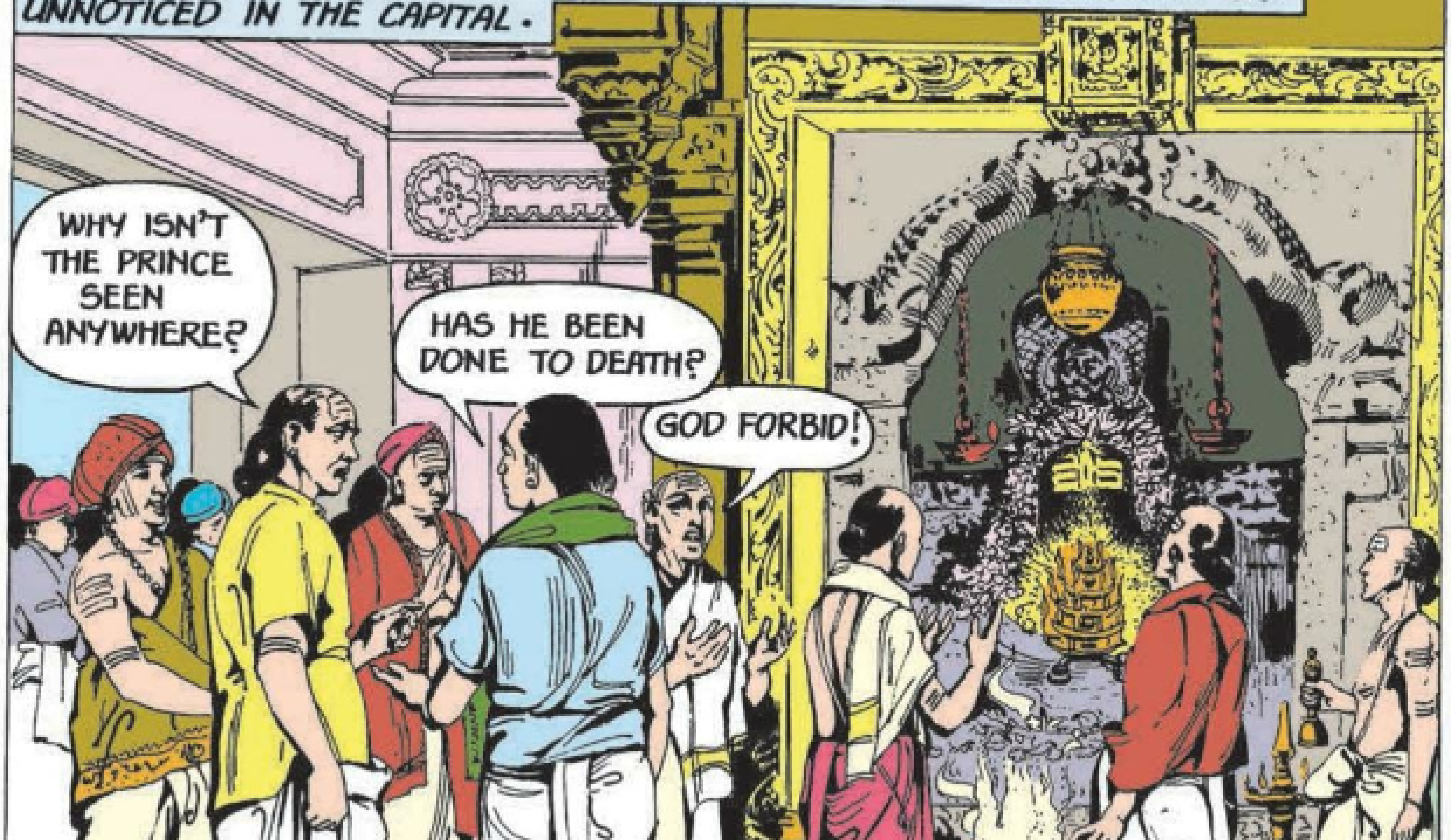
SHE SHOT DOWN THE BIRD. KRISHNADEVA WAS AMAZED.

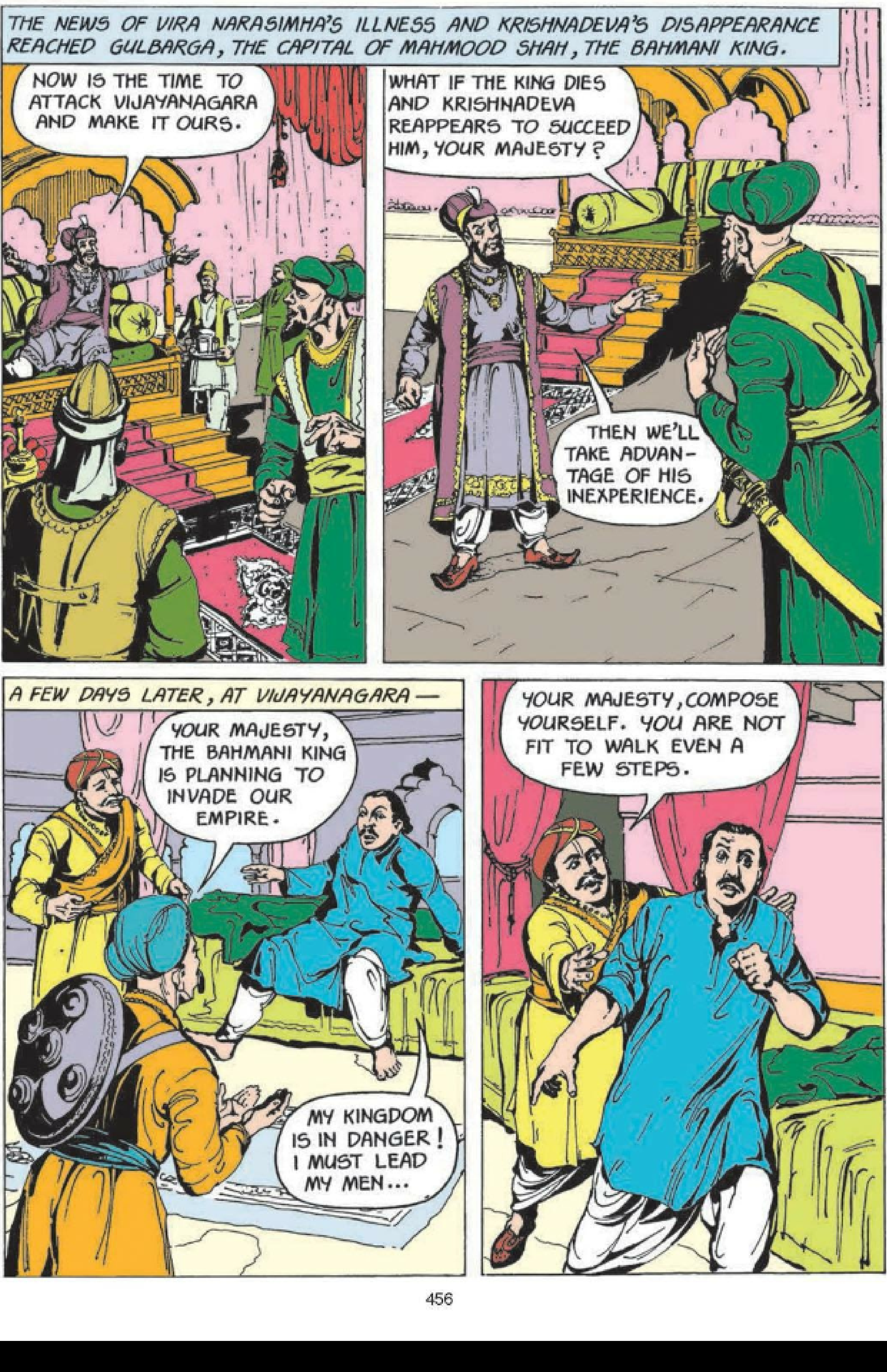

YOU ARE A GOOD SHOT, INDEED, CHINNA!
AND YOU ARE A COWARD, AFRAID EVEN TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME!

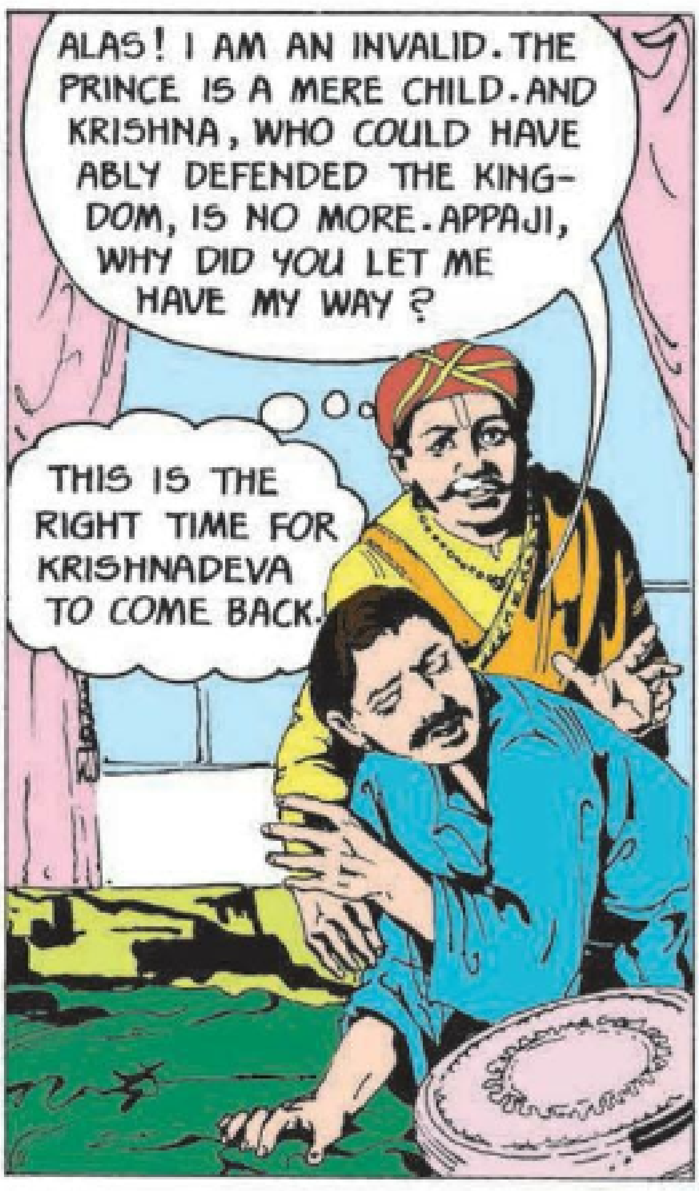
A FEW DAYS LATER —

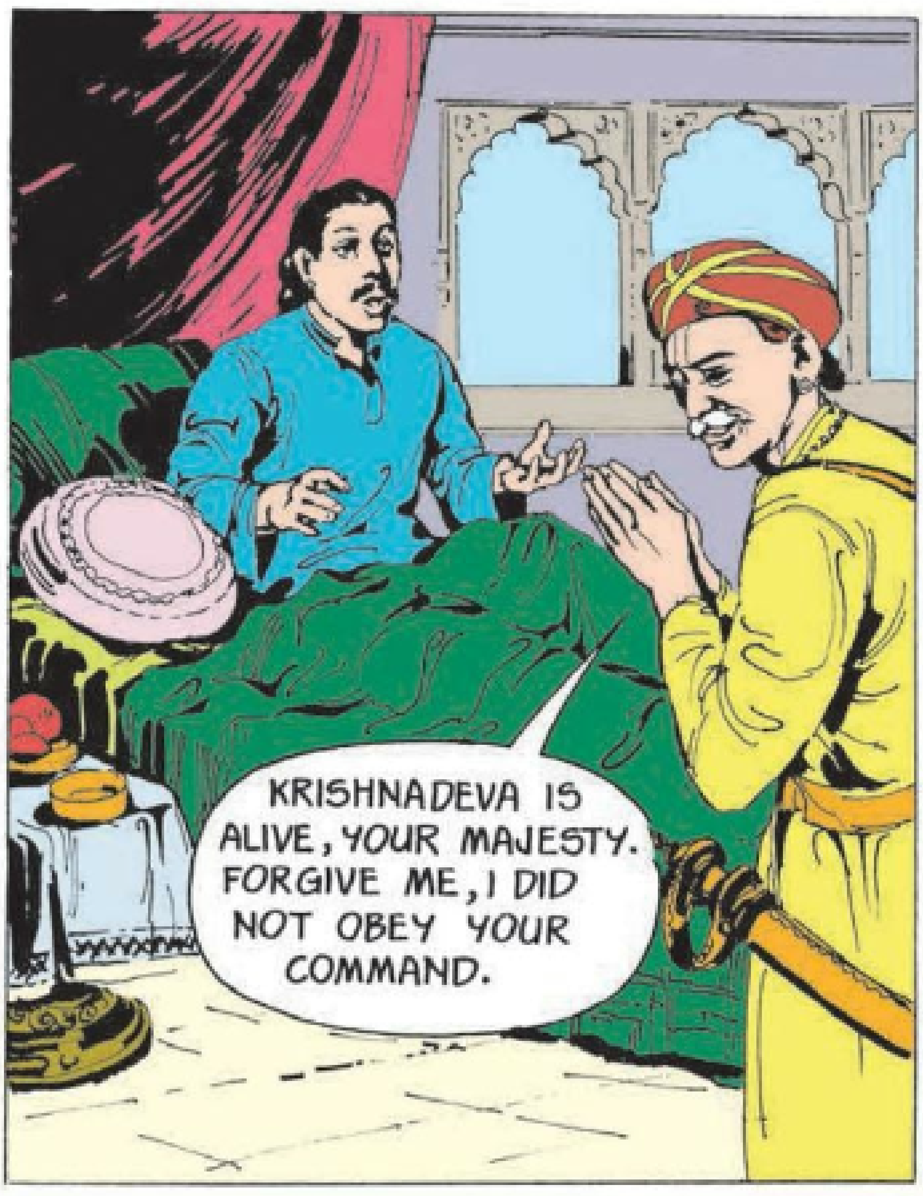

MUST YOU LEAVE?
I MUST. GOD WILLING, I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN.

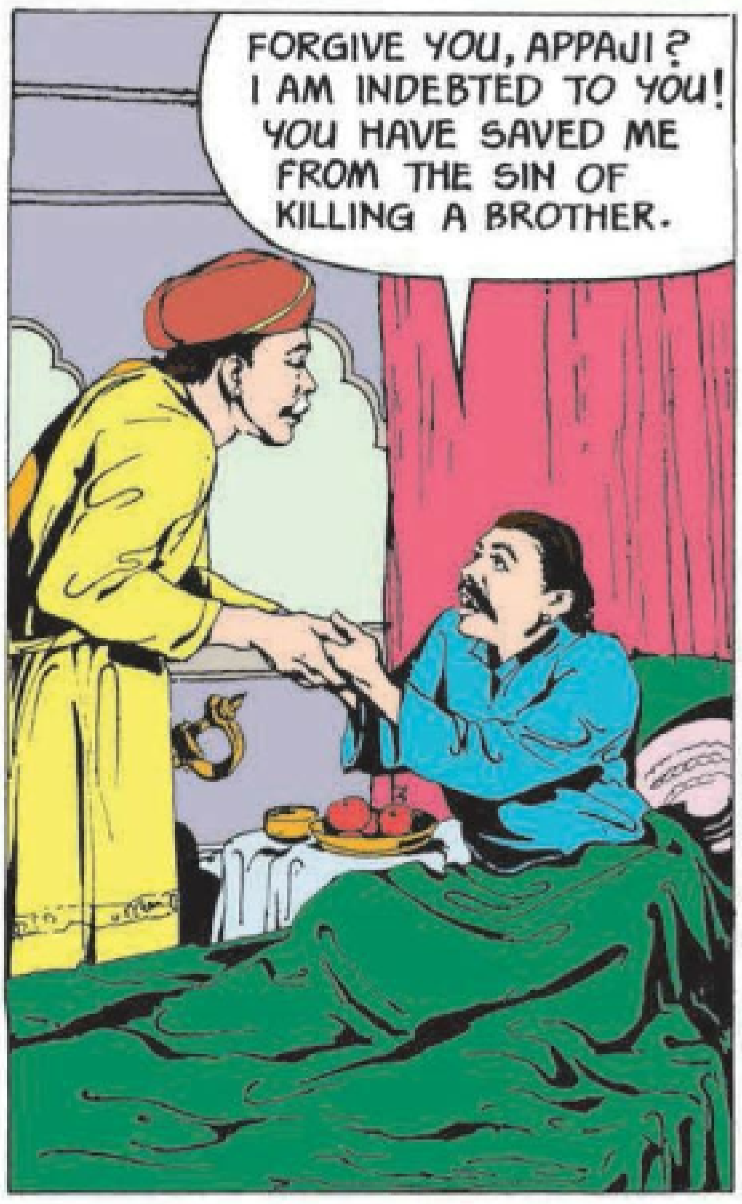
MEANWHILE, THE SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF KRISHNADEVA DID NOT GO UNNOTICED IN THE CAPITAL.

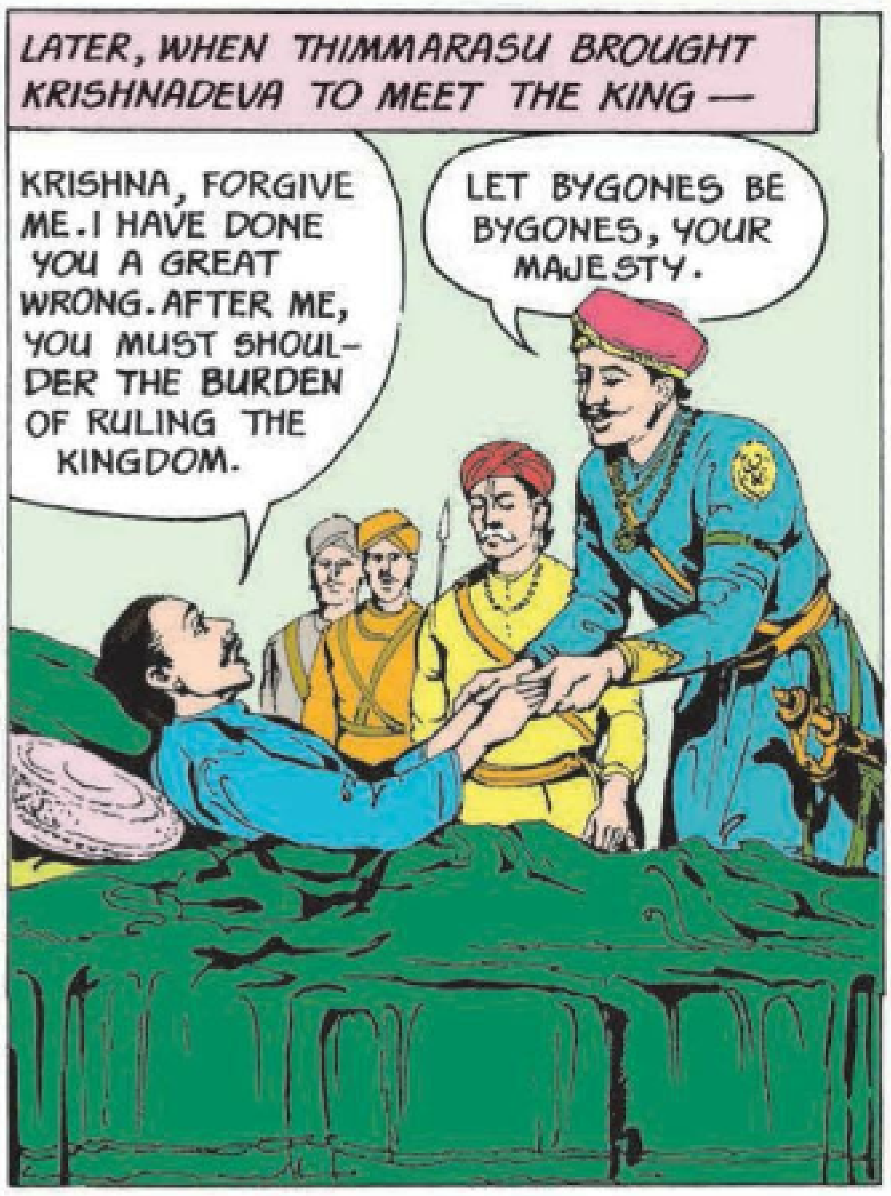

WHY ISN'T THE PRINCE SEEN ANYWHERE?
HAS HE BEEN DONE TO DEATH?
GOD FORBID!

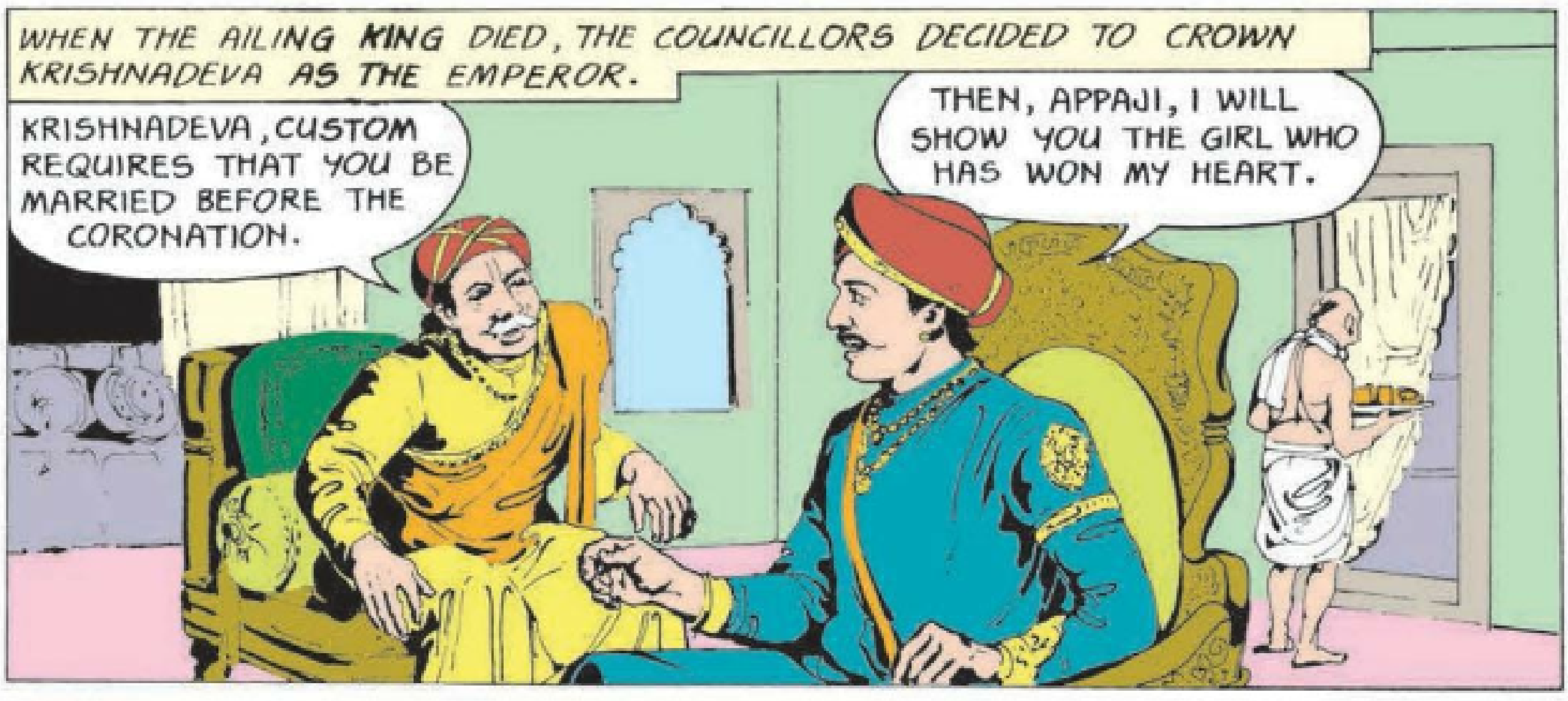

THE NEWS OF VIRA NARASIMHA'S ILLNESS AND KRISHNADEVA'S DISAPPEARANCE REACHED GULBARGA, THE CAPITAL OF MAHMOOD SHAH, THE BAHMANI KING.
NOW IS THE TIME TO ATTACK VIJAYANAGARA AND MAKE IT OURS.
WHAT IF THE KING DIES AND KRISHNADEVA REAPPEARS TO SUCCEED HIM, YOUR MAJESTY?
THEN WE'LL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS INEXPERIENCE.
A FEW DAYS LATER, AT VIJAYANAGARA —
YOUR MAJESTY, THE BAHMANI KING IS PLANNING TO INVADE OUR EMPIRE.
MY KINGDOM IS IN DANGER! I MUST LEAD MY MEN...
YOUR MAJESTY, COMPOSE YOURSELF. YOU ARE NOT FIT TO WALK EVEN A FEW STEPS.

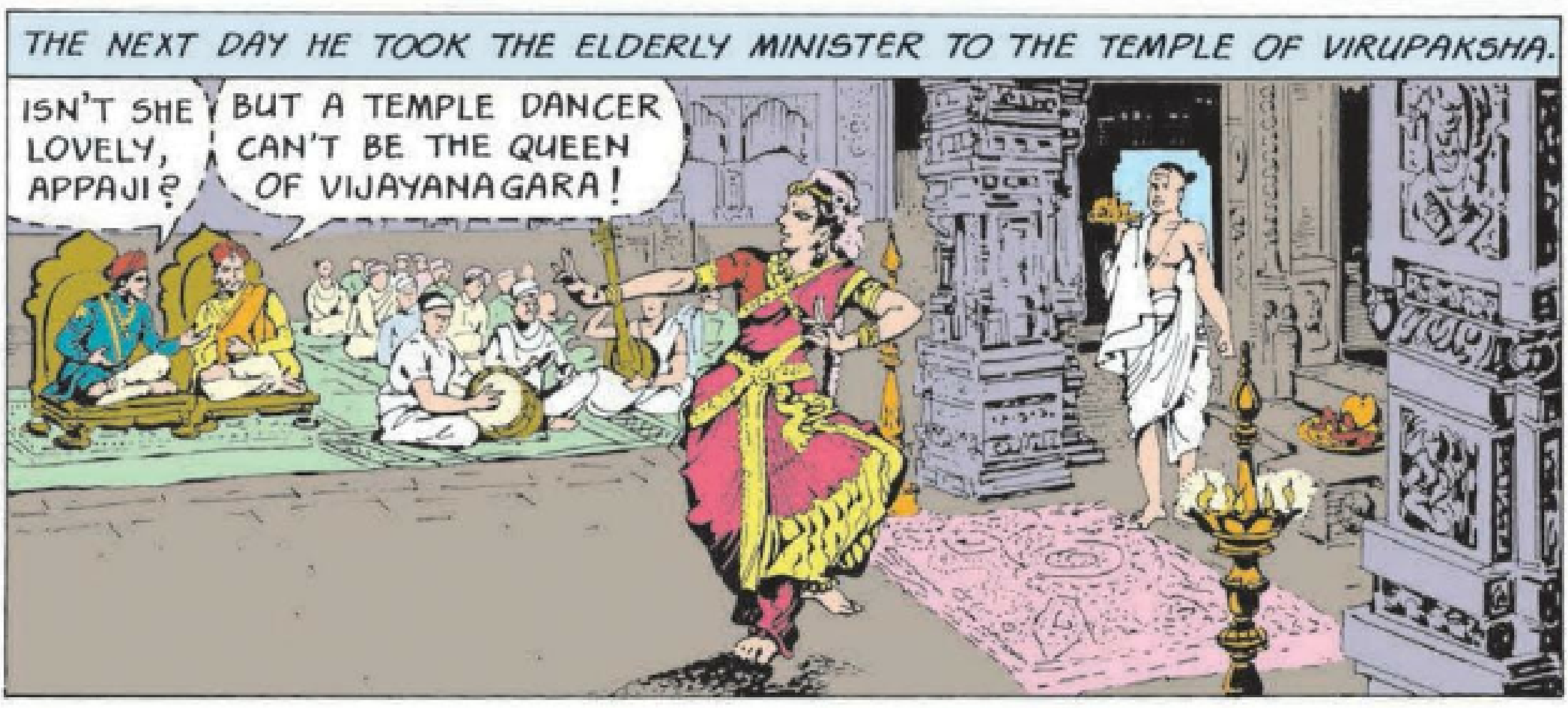

ALAS! I AM AN INVALID. THE PRINCE IS A MERE CHILD. AND KRISHNA, WHO COULD HAVE ABLY DEFENDED THE KINGDOM, IS NO MORE. APPAJI, WHY DID YOU LET ME HAVE MY WAY?
THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR KRISHNADEVA TO COME BACK.

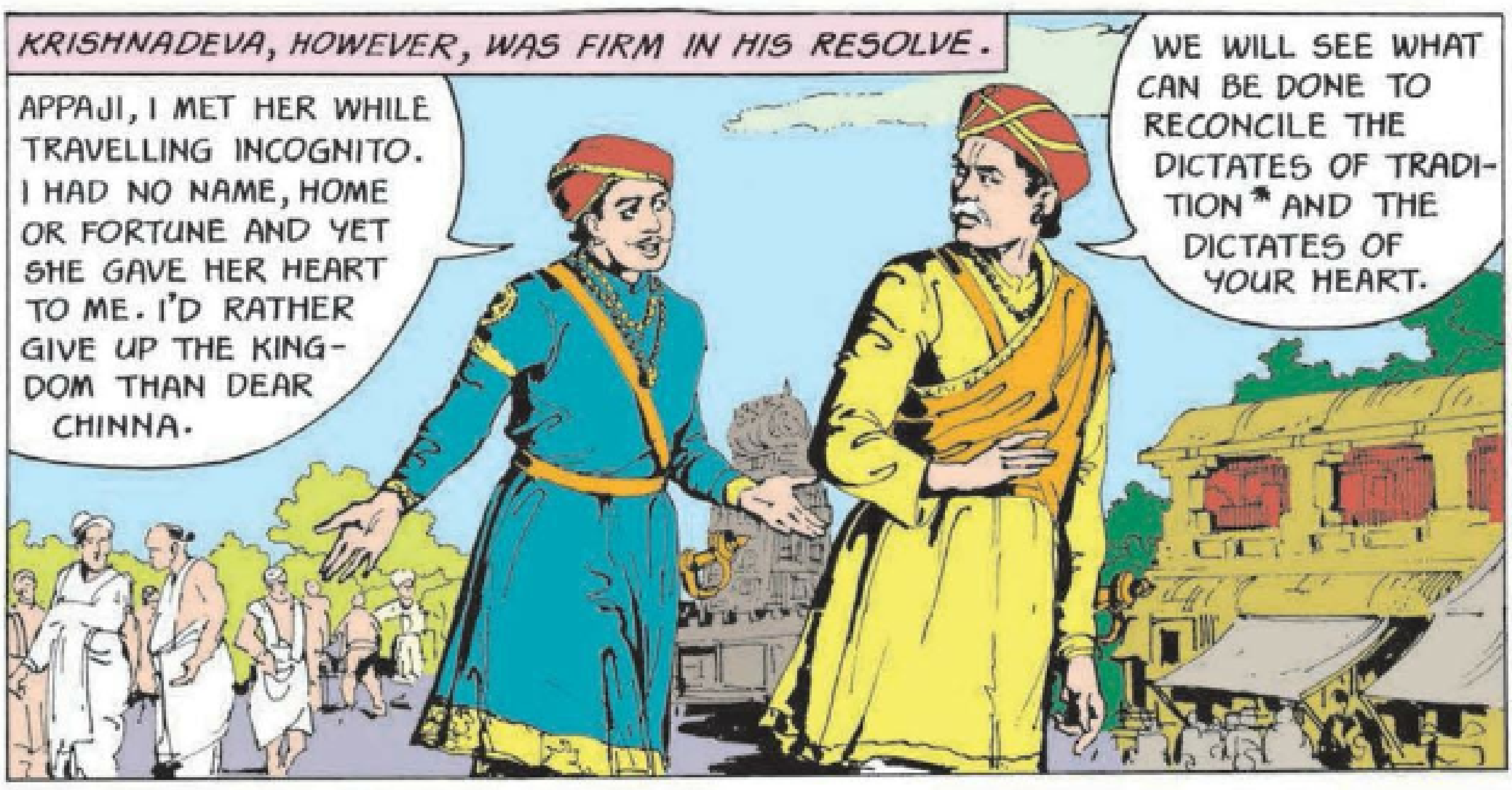

KRISHNADEVA IS ALIVE, YOUR MAJESTY. FORGIVE ME, I DID NOT OBEY YOUR COMMAND.


FORGIVE YOU, APPAJI? I AM INDEBTED TO YOU! YOU HAVE SAVED ME FROM THE SIN OF KILLING A BROTHER.

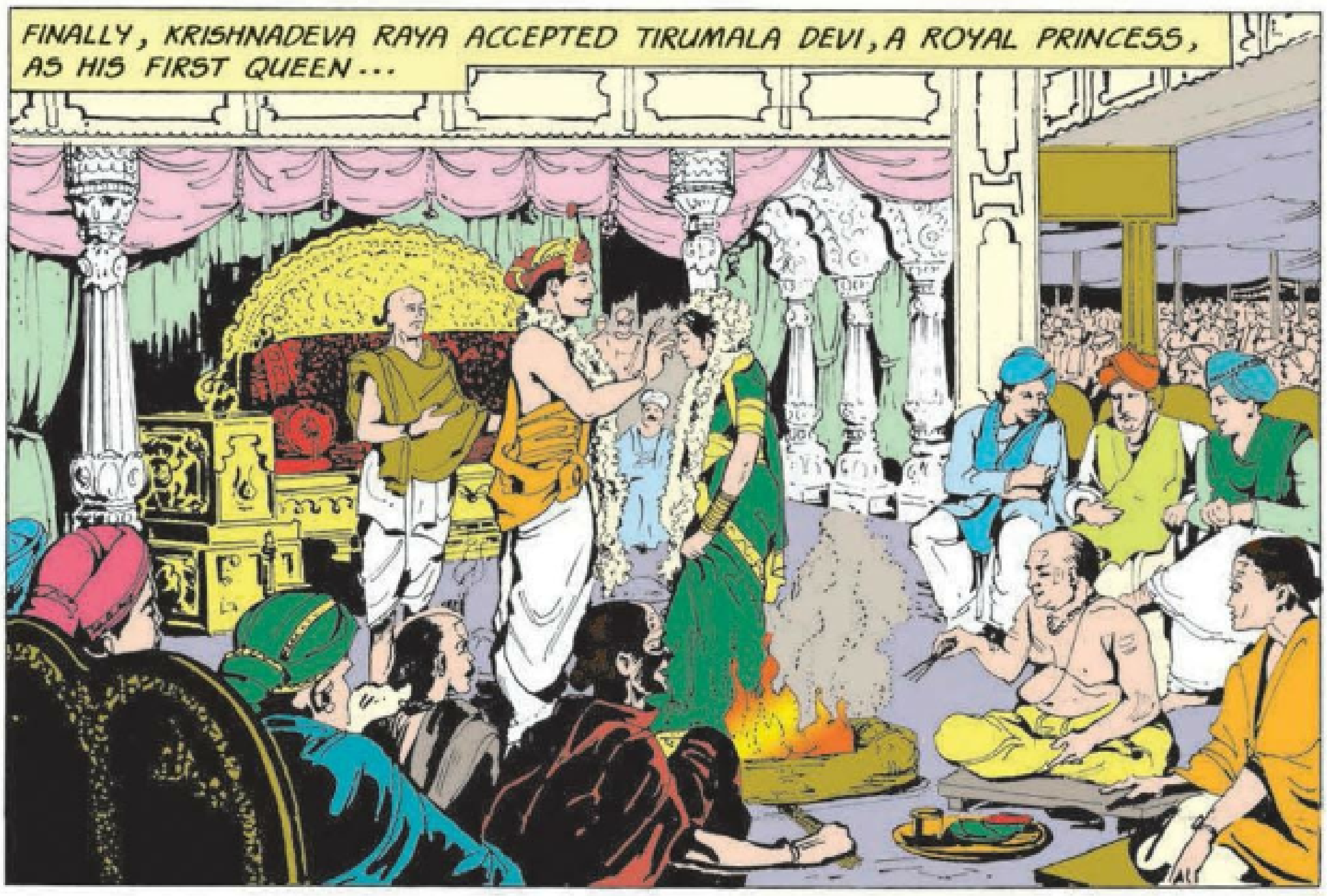

LATER, WHEN THIMMARASU BROUGHT KRISHNADEVA TO MEET THE KING —
KRISHNA, FORGIVE ME. I HAVE DONE YOU A GREAT WRONG. AFTER ME, YOU MUST SHOULDER THE BURDEN OF RULING THE KINGDOM.
LET BYGONES BE BYGONES, YOUR MAJESTY.


WHEN THE AILING KING DIED, THE COUNCILLORS DECIDED TO CROWN KRISHNADEVA AS THE EMPEROR.
KRISHNADEVA, CUSTOM REQUIRES THAT YOU BE MARRIED BEFORE THE CORONATION.
THEN, APPAJI, I WILL SHOW YOU THE GIRL WHO HAS WON MY HEART.

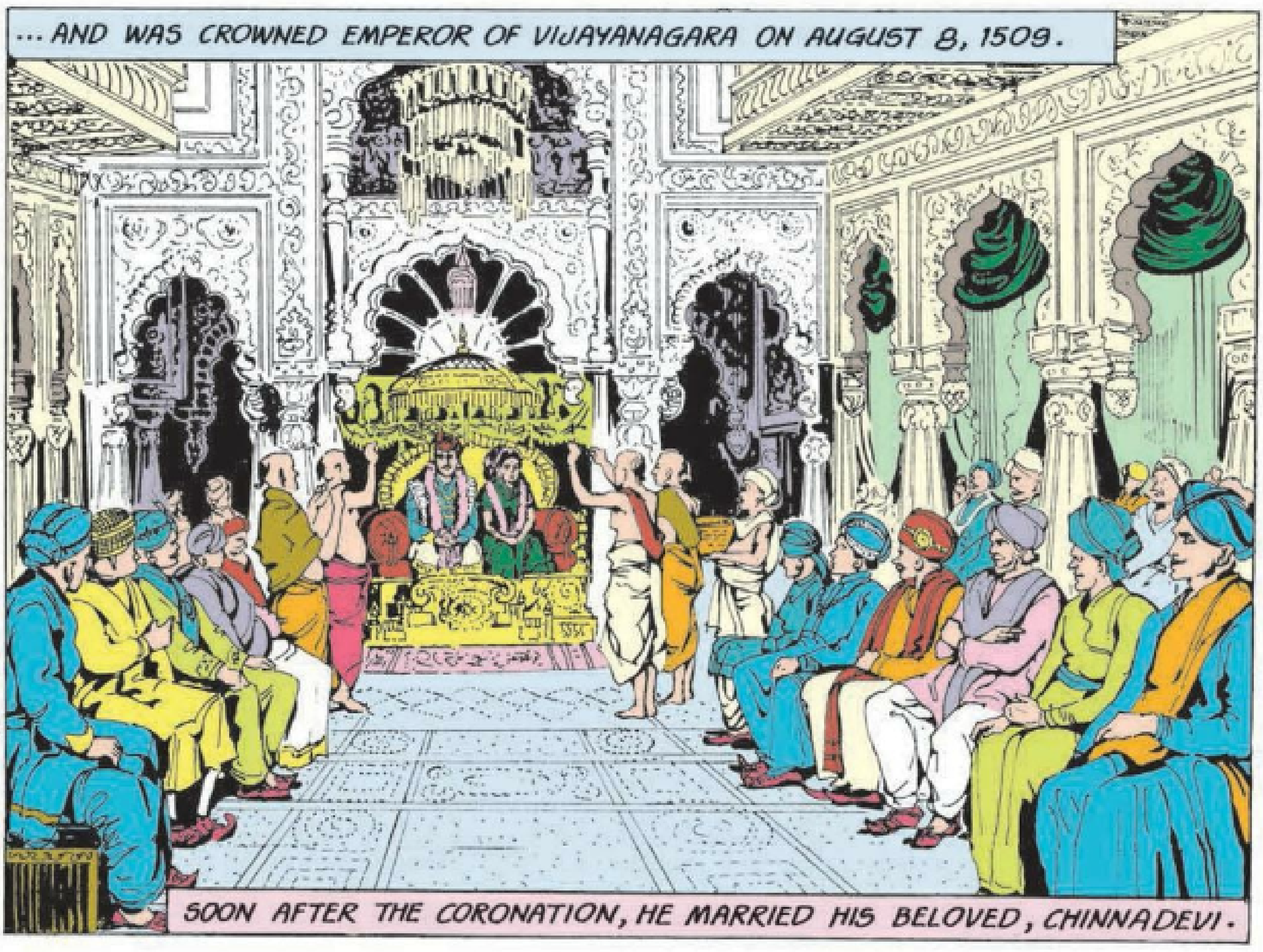

THE NEXT DAY HE TOOK THE ELDERLY MINISTER TO THE TEMPLE OF VIRUPAKSHA.
ISN'T SHE LOVELY, APPAJI?
BUT A TEMPLE DANCER CAN'T BE THE QUEEN OF VIJAYANAGARA!


KRISHNADEVA, HOWEVER, WAS FIRM IN HIS RESOLVE.
APPAJI, I MET HER WHILE TRAVELLING INCOGNITO. I HAD NO NAME, HOME OR FORTUNE AND YET SHE GAVE HER HEART TO ME. I'D RATHER GIVE UP THE KINGDOM THAN DEAR CHINNA.
WE WILL SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE TO RECONCILE THE DICTATES OF TRADITION* AND THE DICTATES OF YOUR HEART.

* THE FIRST WIFE OF A KING SHOULD BE A WOMAN OF NOBLE BIRTH.

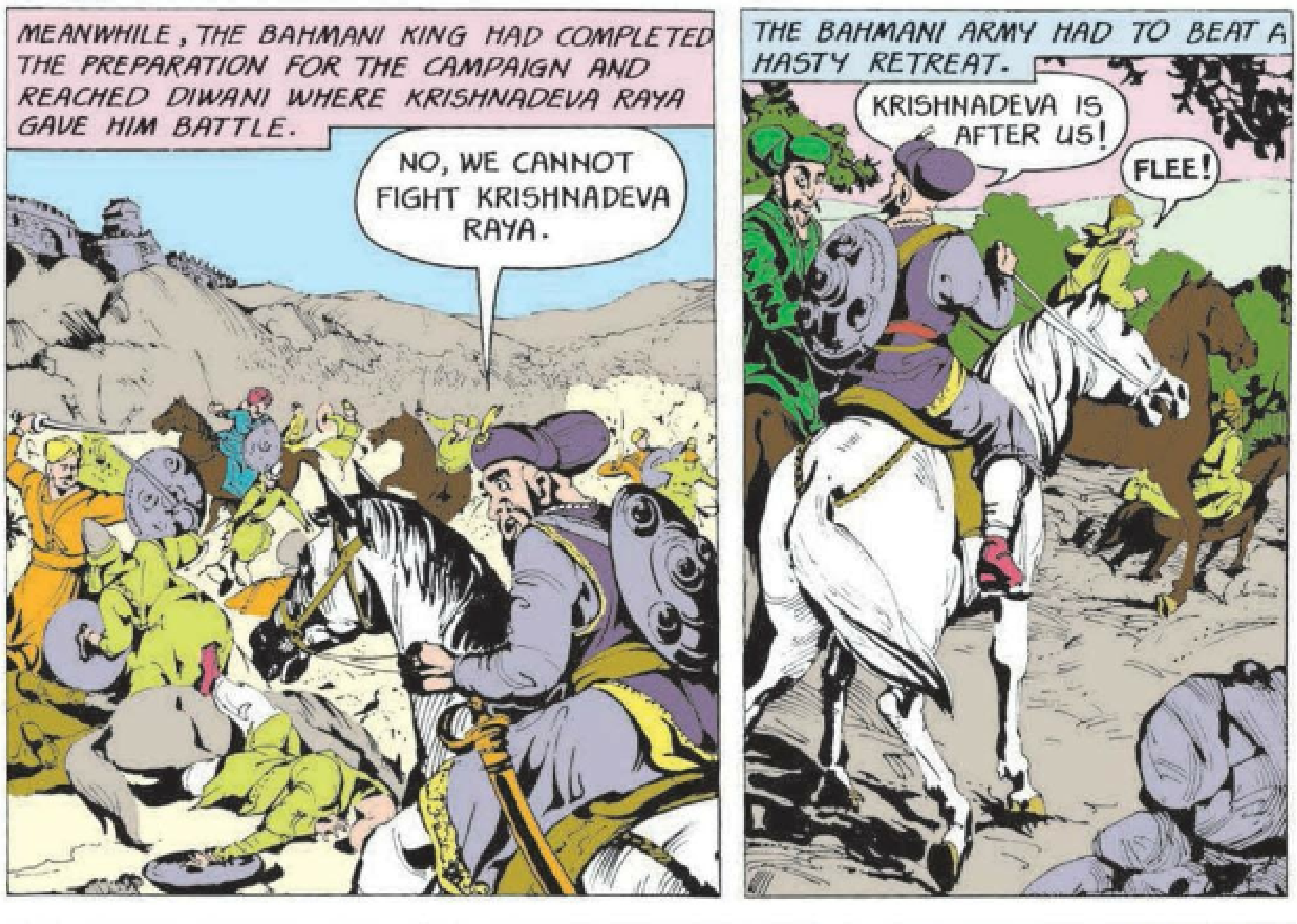


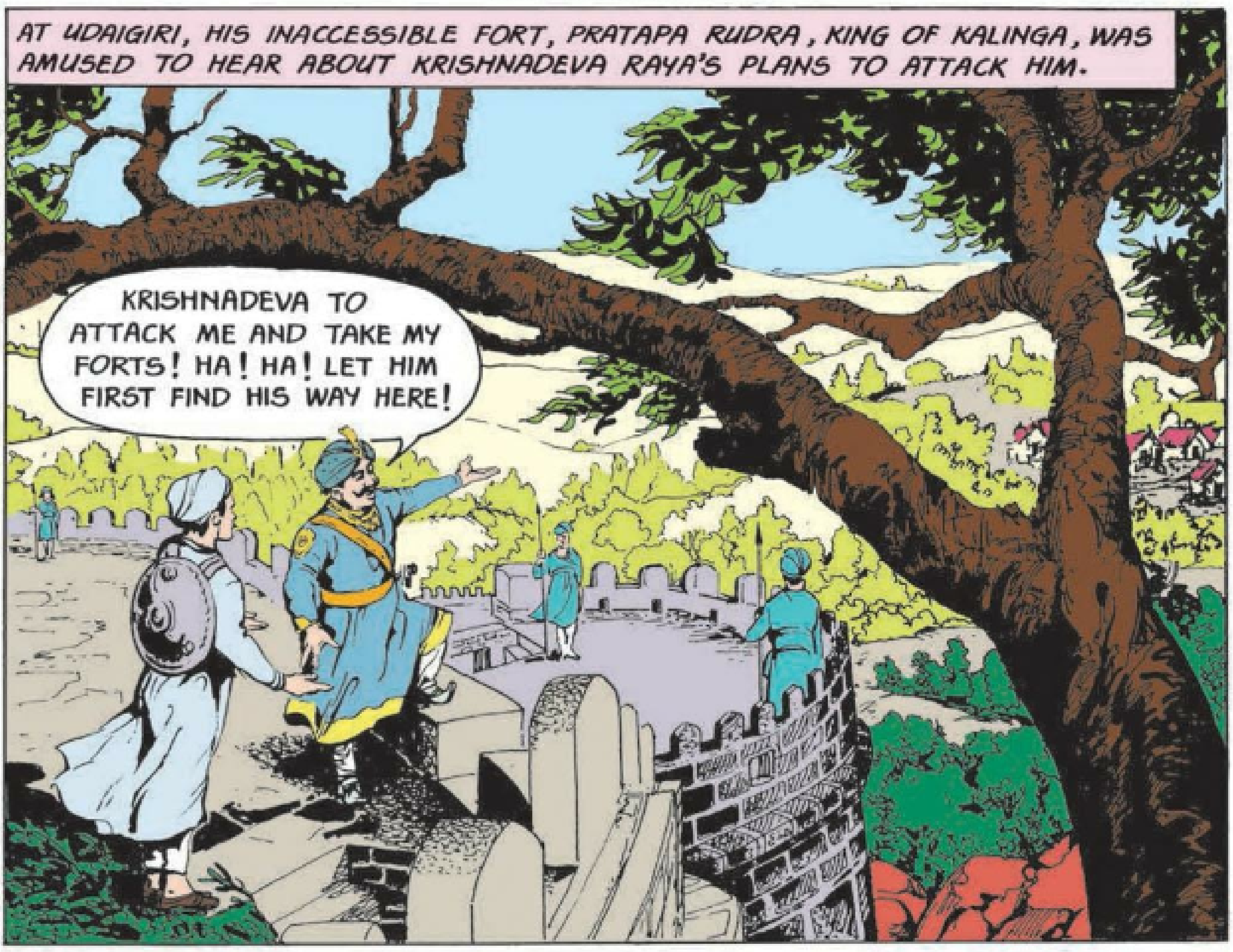
FINALLY, KRISHNADEVA RAYA ACCEPTED TIRUMALA DEVI, A ROYAL PRINCESS, AS HIS FIRST QUEEN...



...AND WAS CROWNED EMPEROR OF VIJAYANAGARA ON AUGUST 8, 1509.

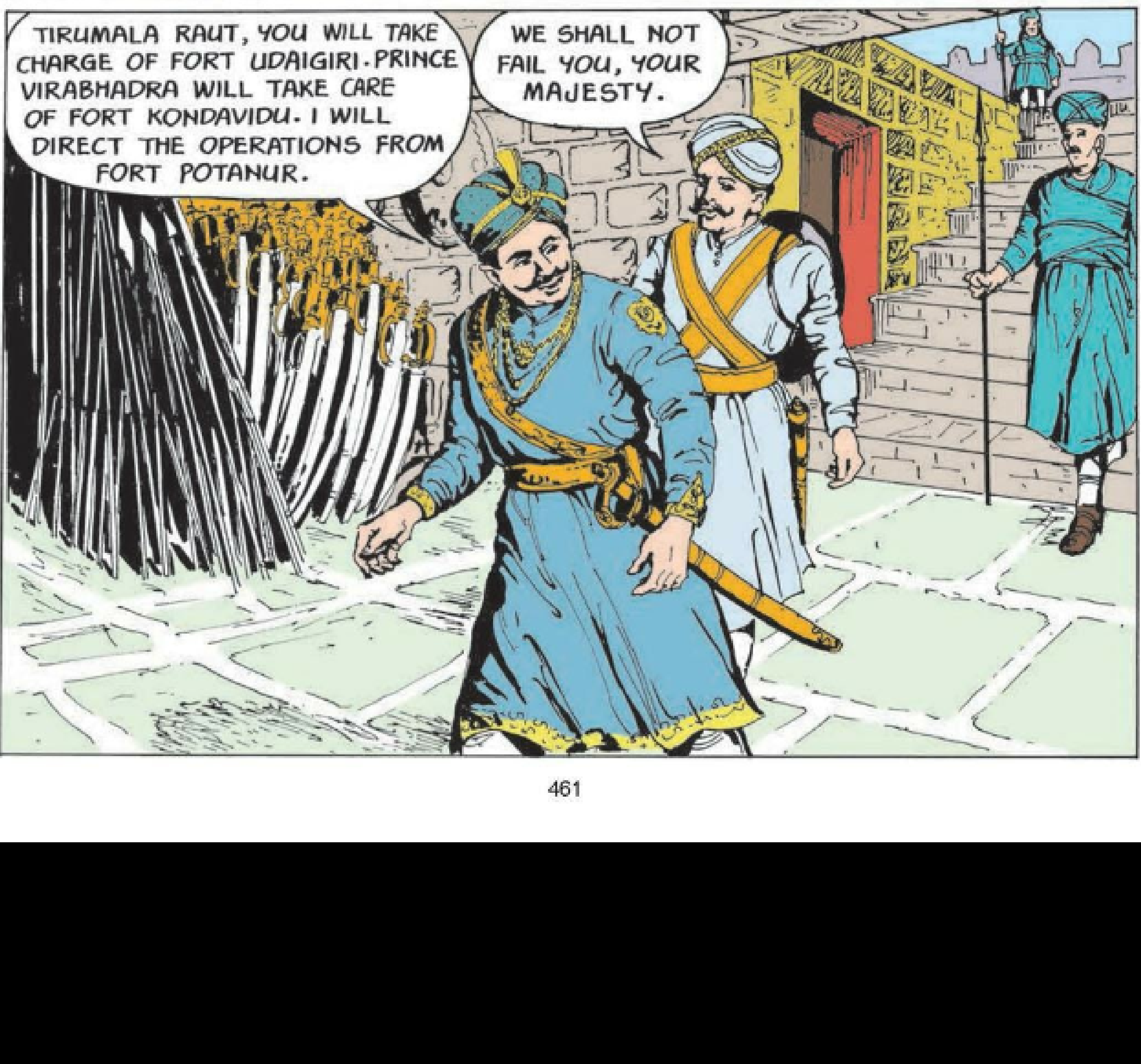
SOON AFTER THE CORONATION, HE MARRIED HIS BELOVED, CHINNADEVI.


MEANWHILE, THE BAHMANI KING HAD COMPLETED THE PREPARATION FOR THE CAMPAIGN AND REACHED DIWANI WHERE KRISHNADEVA RAYA GAVE HIM BATTLE.
NO, WE CANNOT FIGHT KRISHNADEVA RAYA.
THE BAHMANI ARMY HAD TO BEAT A HASTY RETREAT.
KRISHNADEVA IS AFTER US!
FLEE!
LATER, KRISHNADEVA RAYA ADDRESSED HIS ARMY.
OUR VICTORY SHOULD NOT MAKE US COMPLACENT. PRATAPA RUDRA OF KALINGA AND ADIL KHAN OF BIJAPUR ARE OUR SWORN ENEMIES. ONLY WHEN THEY ARE DEFEATED, WILL OUR KINGDOM KNOW PEACE. SO, FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE, WE MUST SUBDUE THEM.

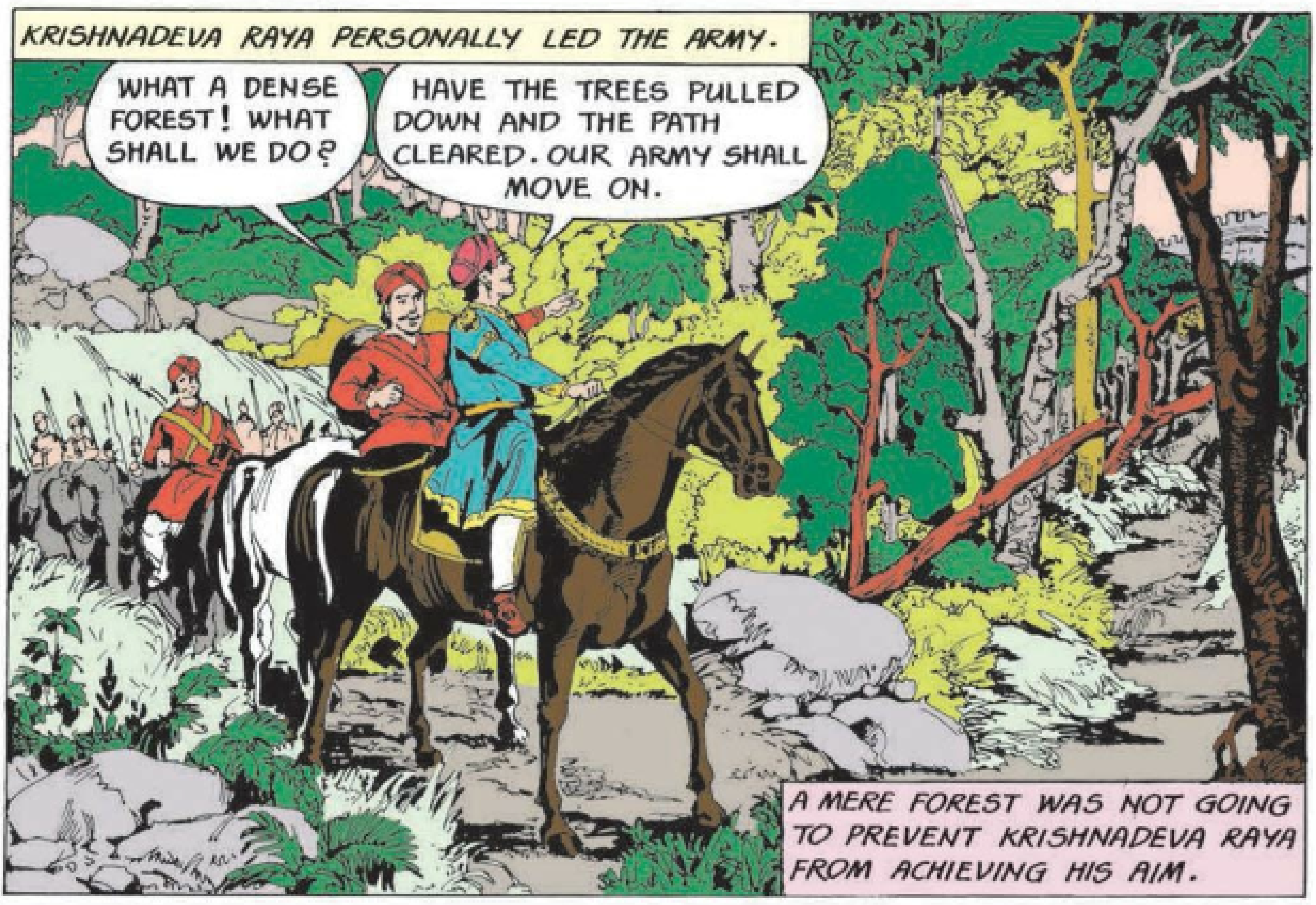


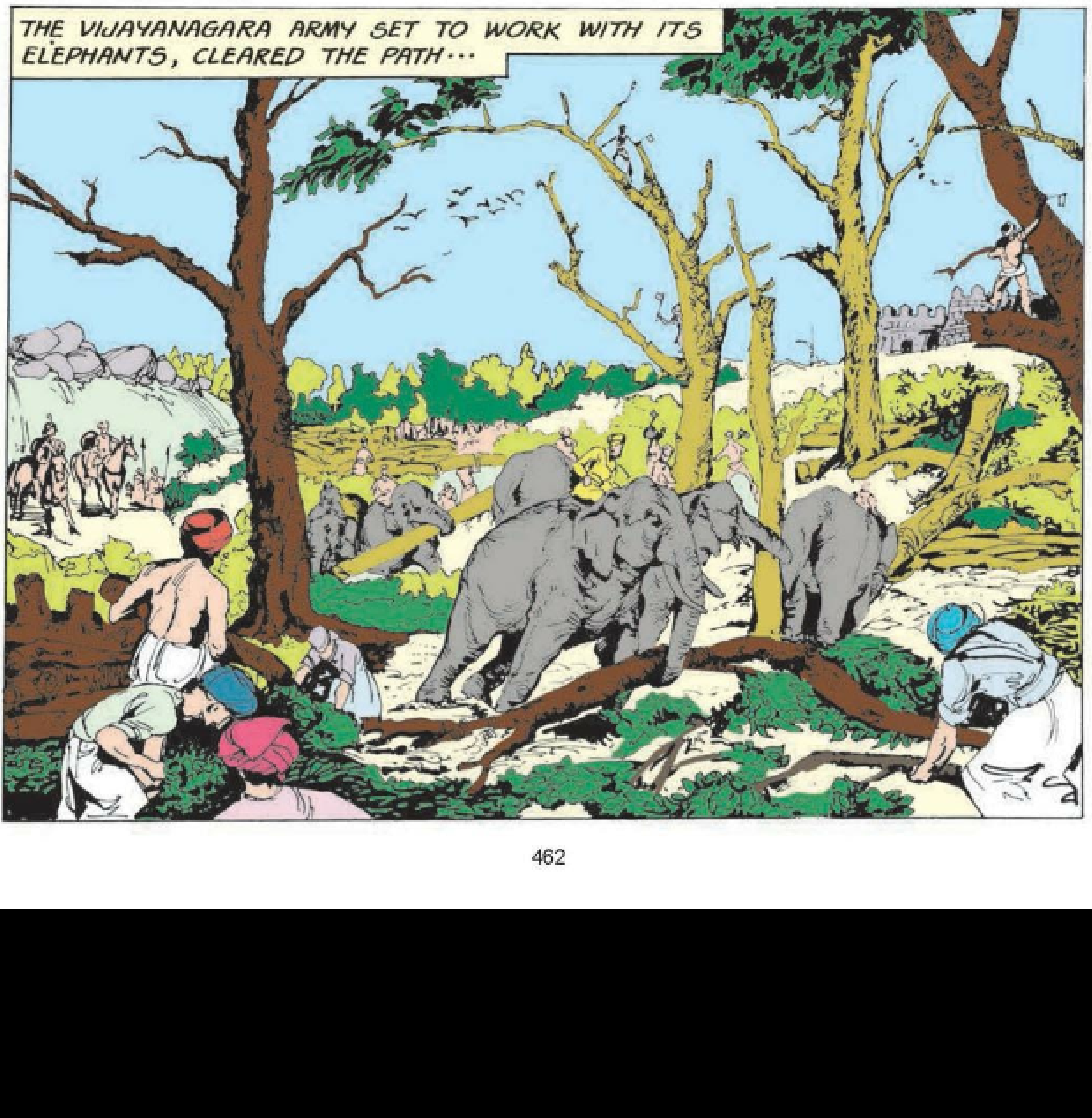
AT UDAIGIRI, HIS INACCESSIBLE FORT, PRATAPA RUDRA, KING OF KALINGA, WAS AMUSED TO HEAR ABOUT KRISHNADEVA RAYA'S PLANS TO ATTACK HIM.

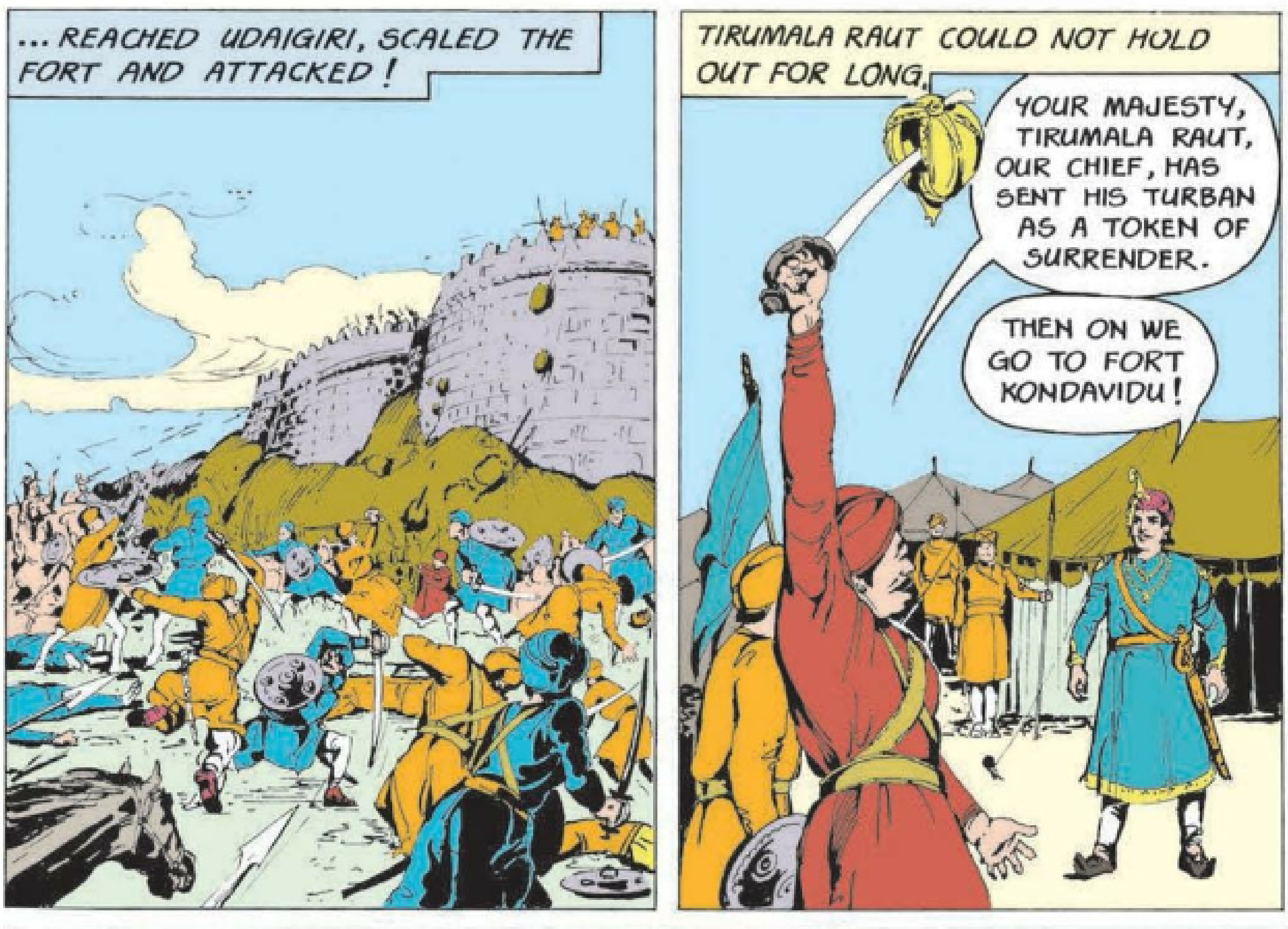
KRISHNADEVA TO ATTACK ME AND TAKE MY FORTS! HA! HA! LET HIM FIRST FIND HIS WAY HERE!



TIRUMALA RAUT, YOU WILL TAKE CHARGE OF FORT UDAIGIRI. PRINCE VIRABHADRA WILL TAKE CARE OF FORT KONDAVIDU. I WILL DIRECT THE OPERATIONS FROM FORT POTANUR.
WE SHALL NOT FAIL YOU, YOUR MAJESTY.


KRISHNADEVA RAYA PERSONALLY LED THE ARMY.
WHAT A DENSE FOREST! WHAT SHALL WE DO?
HAVE THE TREES PULLED DOWN AND THE PATH CLEARED. OUR ARMY SHALL MOVE ON.
A MERE FOREST WAS NOT GOING TO PREVENT KRISHNADEVA RAYA FROM ACHIEVING HIS AIM.


THE VIJAYANAGARA ARMY SET TO WORK WITH ITS ELEPHANTS, CLEARED THE PATH...



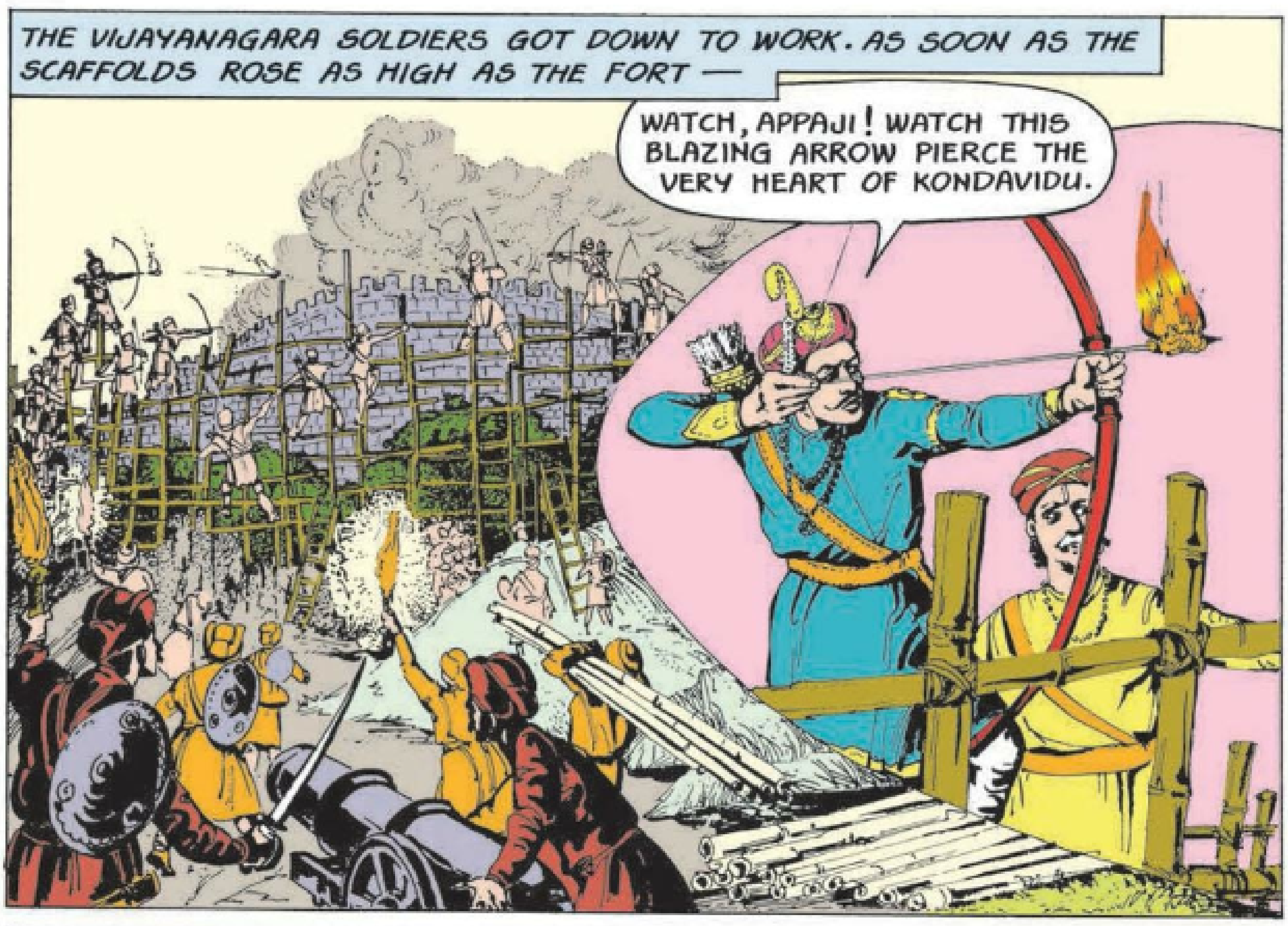
...REACHED UDAIGIRI, SCALED THE FORT AND ATTACKED!

TIRUMALA RAUT COULD NOT HOLD OUT FOR LONG.

YOUR MAJESTY, TIRUMALA RAUT, OUR CHIEF, HAS SENT HIS TURBAN AS A TOKEN OF SURRENDER.
THEN ON WE GO TO FORT KONDAVIDU!

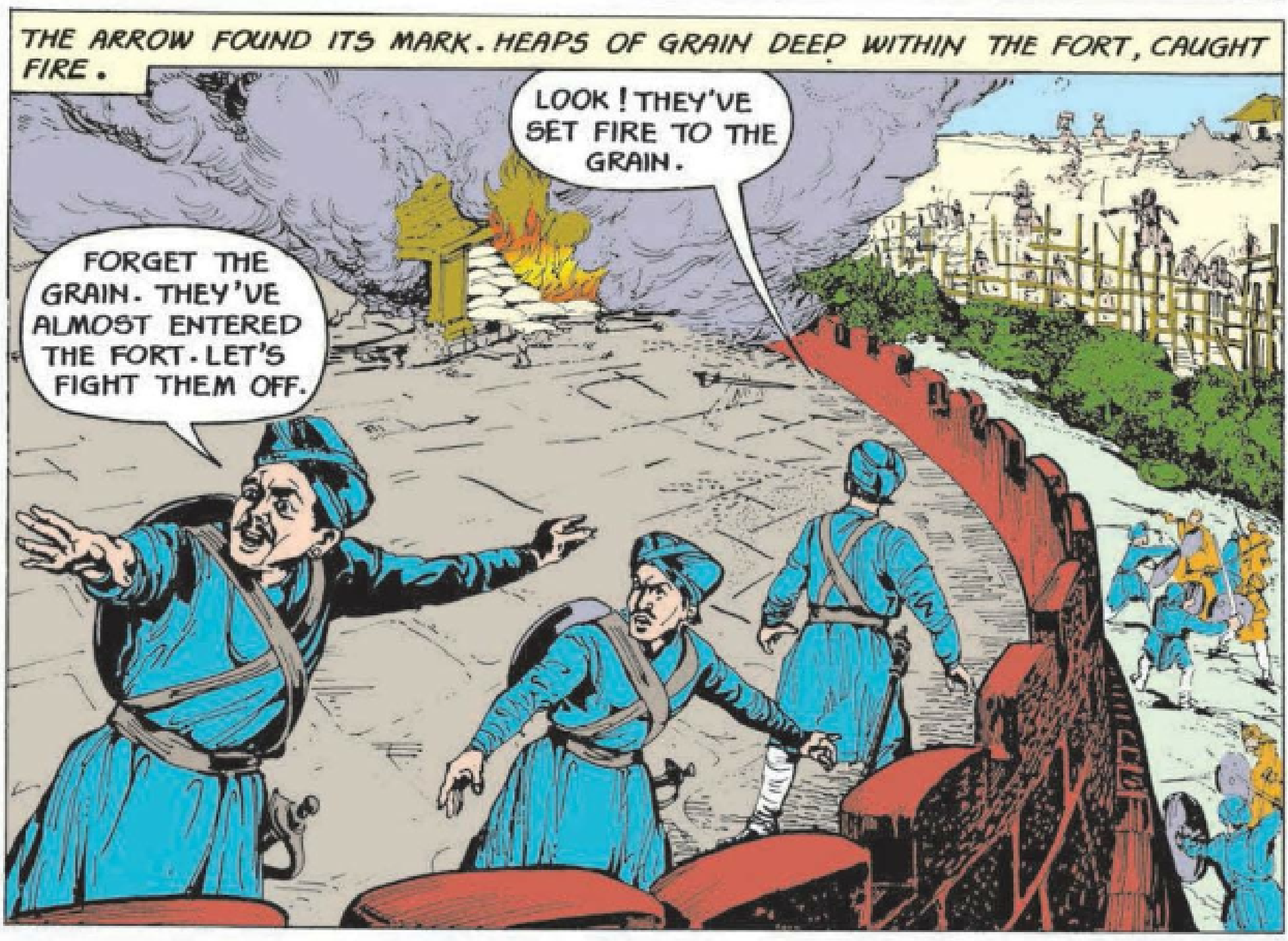
BUT THE VIJAYANAGARA ARMY, ON REACHING KONDAVIDU, FOUND IT HARD TO SCALE THE STRONG FORT.

THE WALL IS STEEP; AND OUR ARROWS DON'T REACH FAR ENOUGH TO KILL OUR ENEMIES.
HAVE BAMBOO SCAFFOLDS ERECTED AROUND THE FORT.



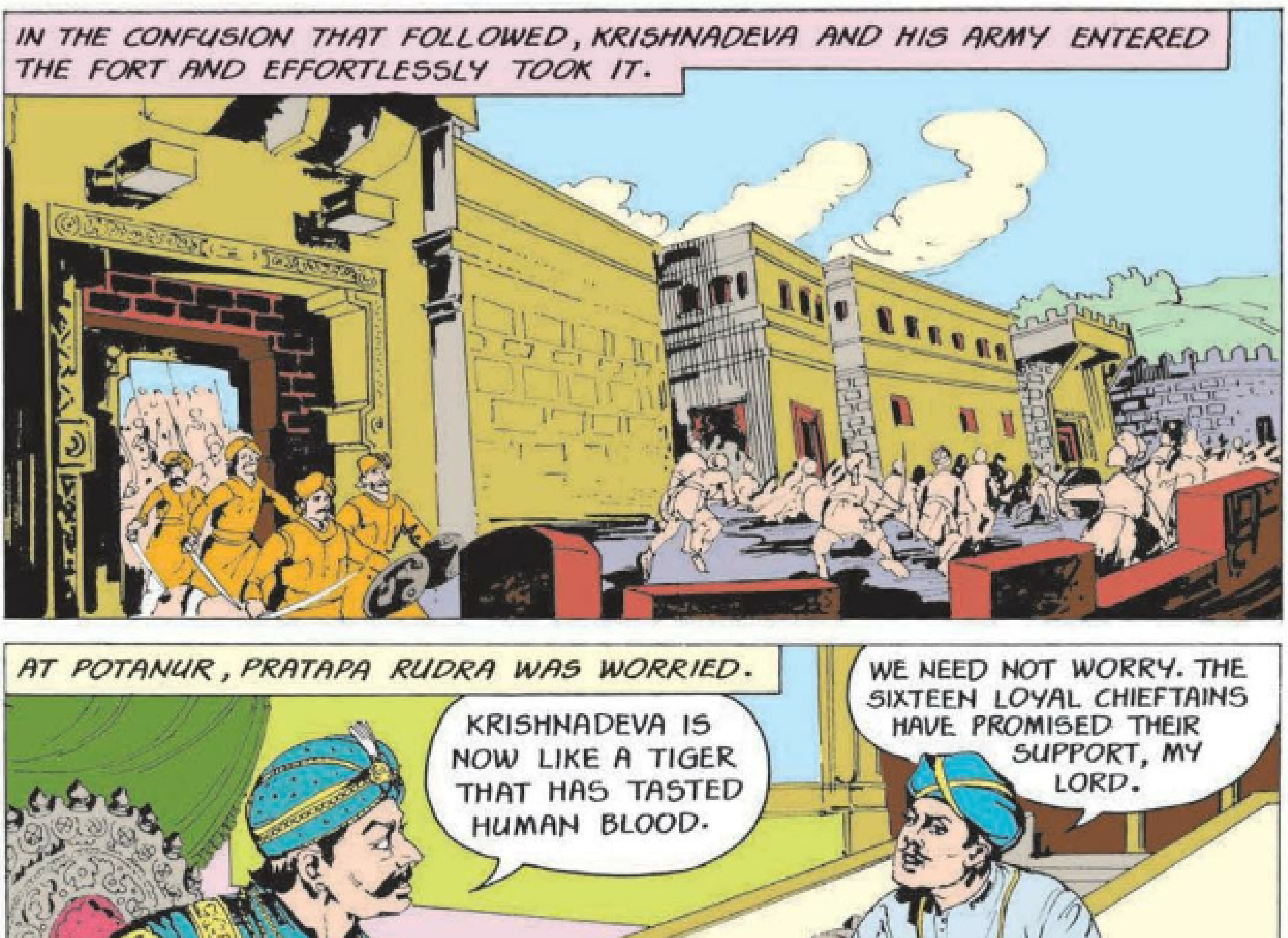
THE VIJAYANAGARA SOLDIERS GOT DOWN TO WORK. AS SOON AS THE SCAFFOLDS ROSE AS HIGH AS THE FORT —

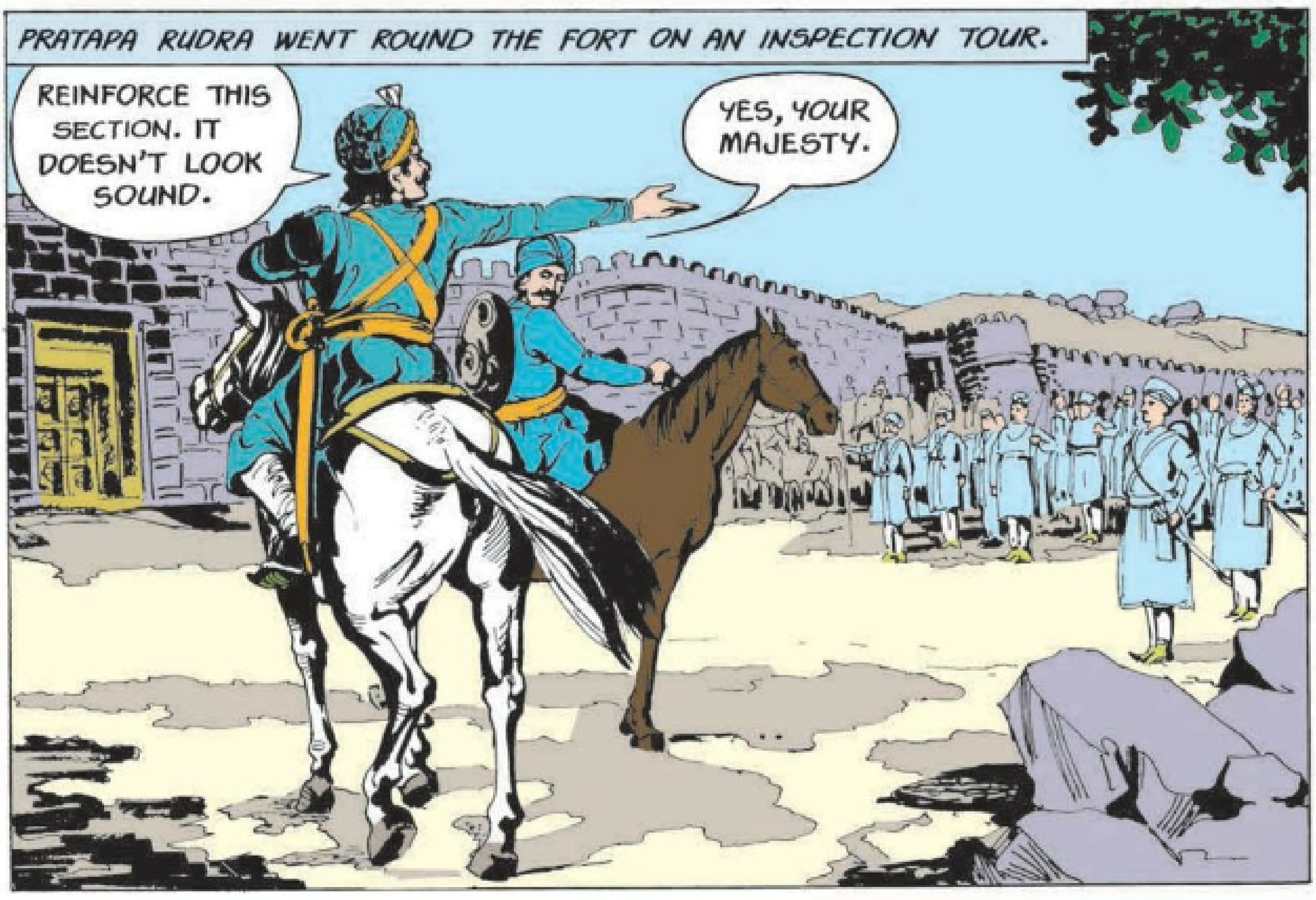
WATCH, APPAJI! WATCH THIS BLAZING ARROW PIERCE THE VERY HEART OF KONDAVIDU.

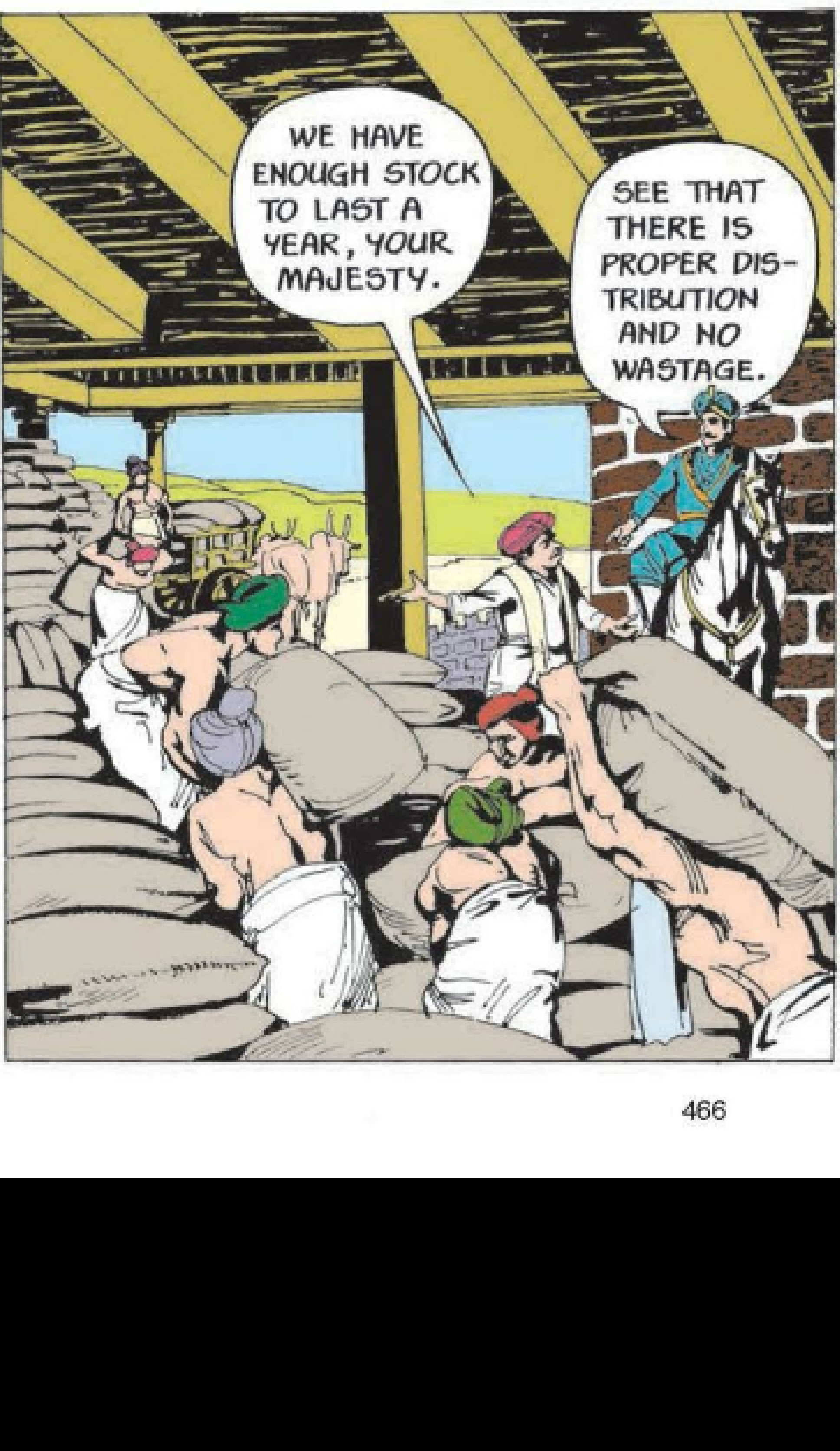


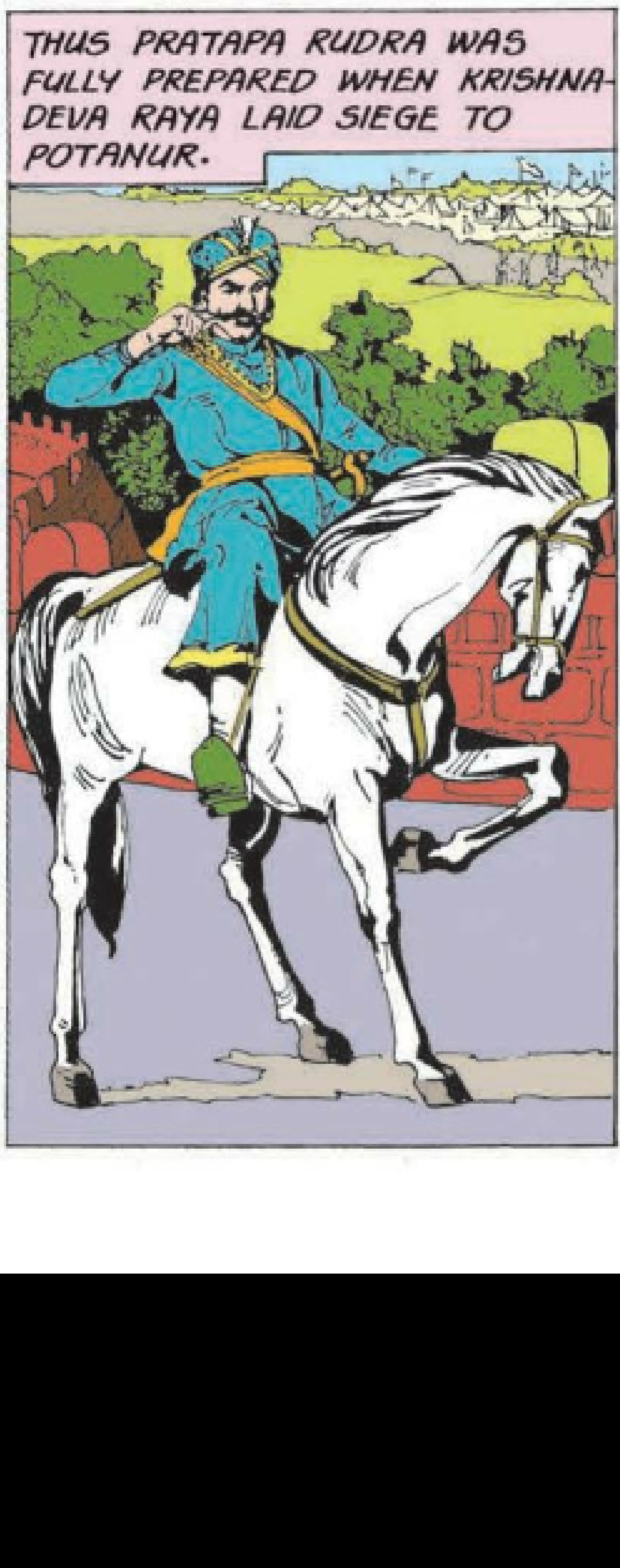
THE ARROW FOUND ITS MARK. HEAPS OF GRAIN DEEP WITHIN THE FORT, CAUGHT FIRE.

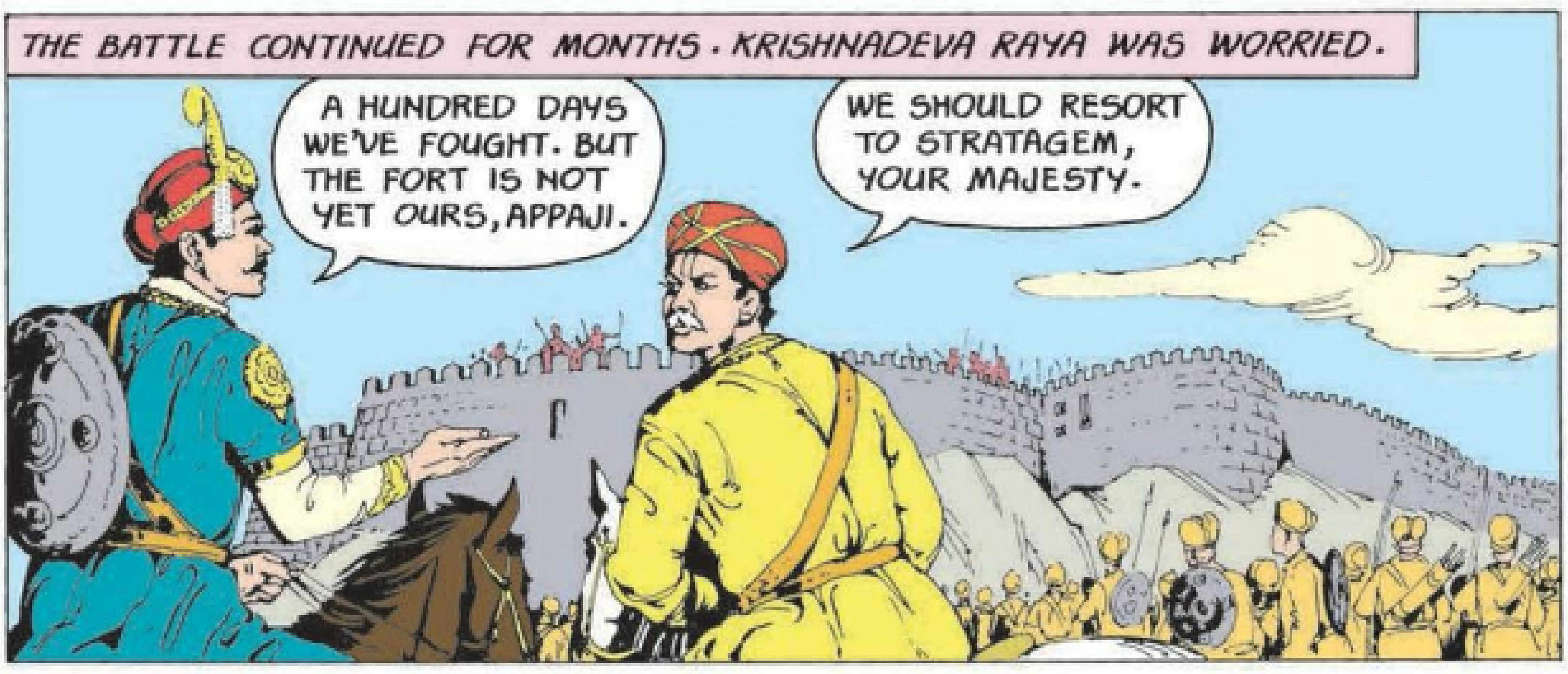
LOOK! THEY'VE SET FIRE TO THE GRAIN.
FORGET THE GRAIN. THEY'VE ALMOST ENTERED THE FORT. LET'S FIGHT THEM OFF.

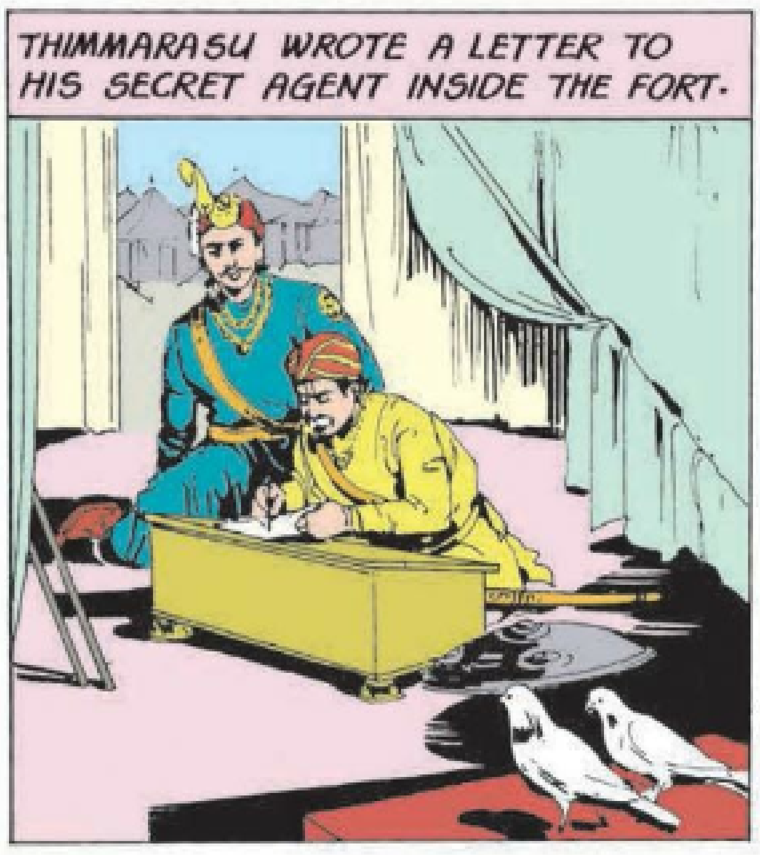

IN THE CONFUSION THAT FOLLOWED, KRISHNADEVA AND HIS ARMY ENTERED THE FORT AND EFFORTLESSLY TOOK IT.
AT POTANUR, PRATAPA RUDRA WAS WORRIED.
KRISHNADEVA IS NOW LIKE A TIGER THAT HAS TASTED HUMAN BLOOD.
WE NEED NOT WORRY. THE SIXTEEN LOYAL CHIEFTAINS HAVE PROMISED THEIR SUPPORT, MY LORD.
THE SIXTEEN CHIEFTAINS SOON ARRIVED AT POTANUR.
LEAVE ALONE KRISHNADEVA, NOT EVEN AN EARTHQUAKE WILL SHAKE US FROM THE FORT.
WE APPRECIATE YOUR COURAGE. AND WE TREASURE YOUR LOYALTY TO THE THRONE.

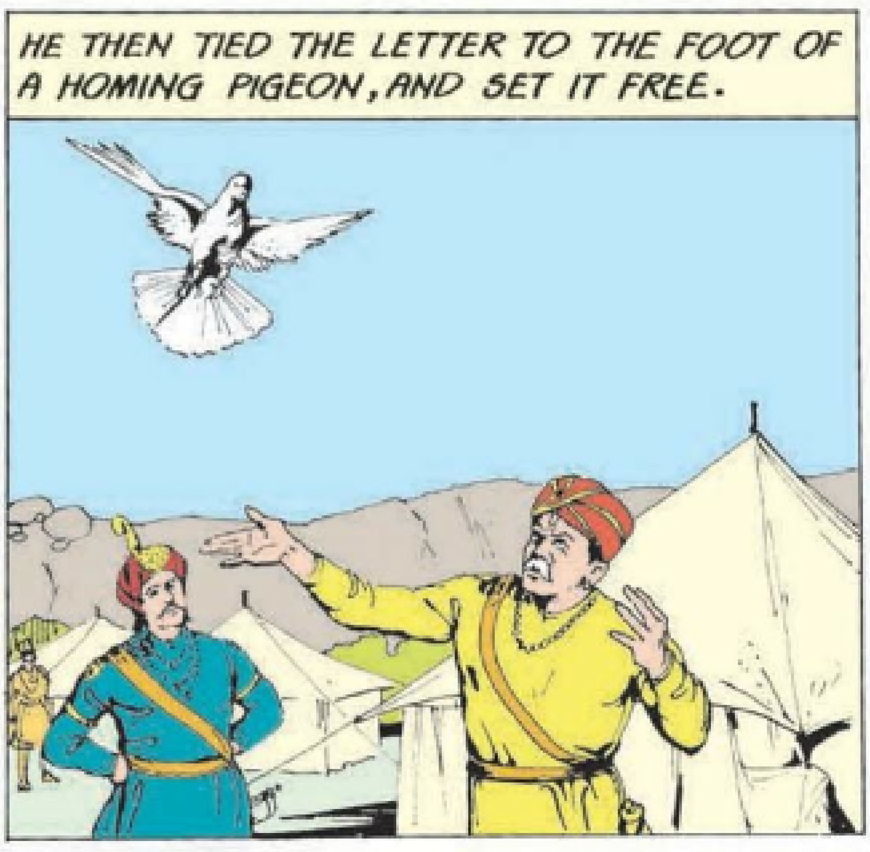

PRATAPA RUDRA WENT ROUND THE FORT ON AN INSPECTION TOUR.
REINFORCE THIS SECTION. IT DOESN'T LOOK SOUND.
YES, YOUR MAJESTY.

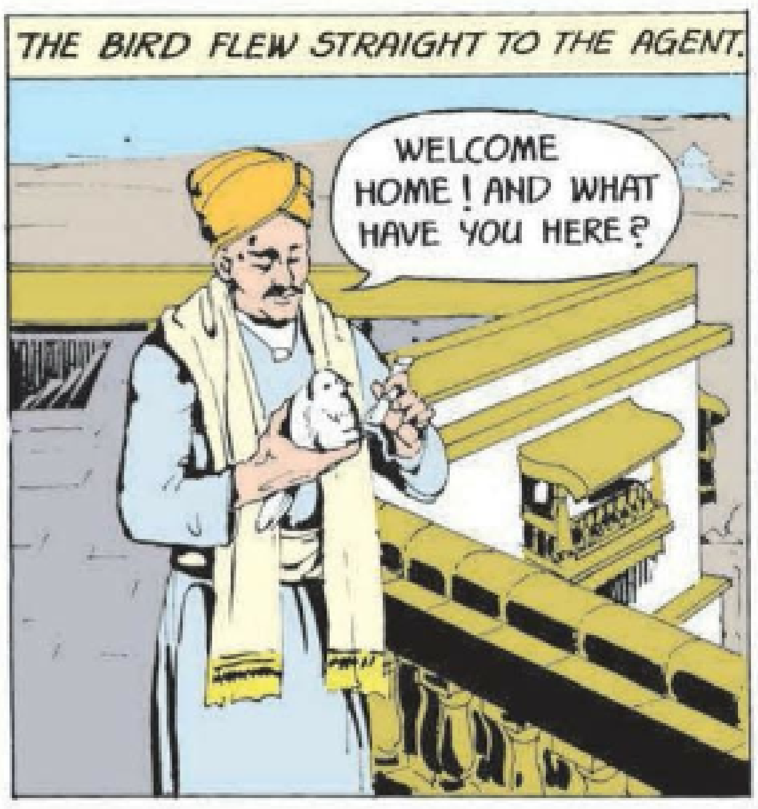

WE HAVE ENOUGH STOCK TO LAST A YEAR, YOUR MAJESTY.
SEE THAT THERE IS PROPER DISTRIBUTION AND NO WASTAGE.

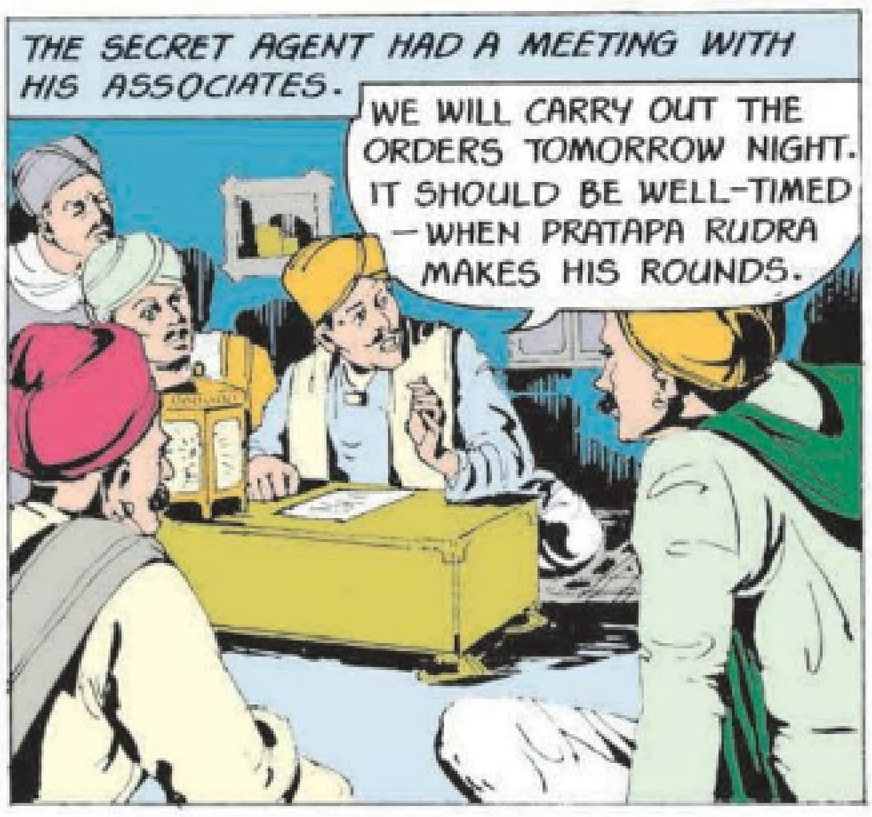

THUS PRATAPA RUDRA WAS FULLY PREPARED WHEN KRISHNADEVA RAYA LAID SIEGE TO POTANUR.

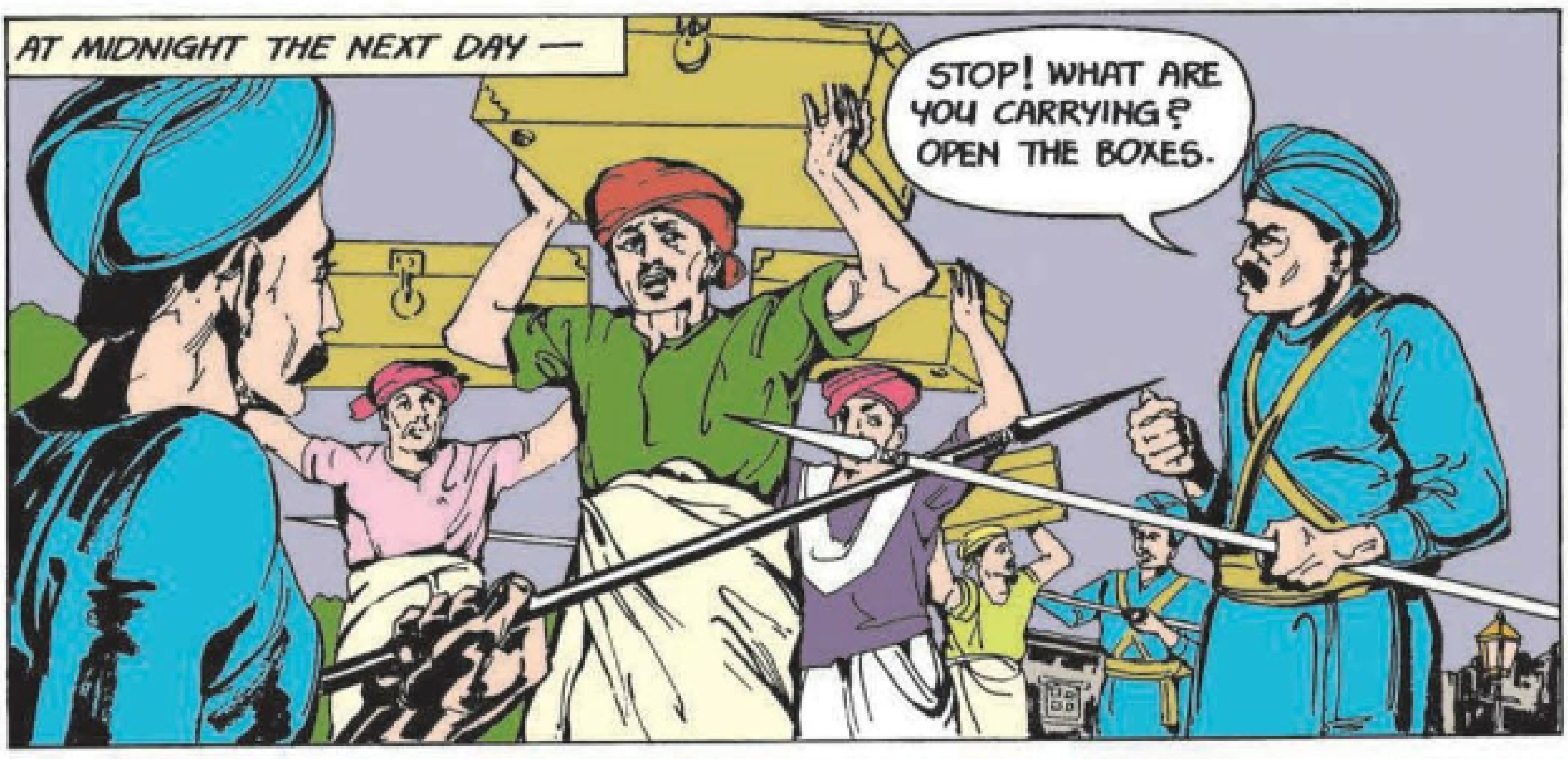

THE BATTLE CONTINUED FOR MONTHS. KRISHNADEVA RAYA WAS WORRIED.
A HUNDRED DAYS WE'VE FOUGHT. BUT THE FORT IS NOT YET OURS, APPAJI.
WE SHOULD RESORT TO STRATAGEM, YOUR MAJESTY.

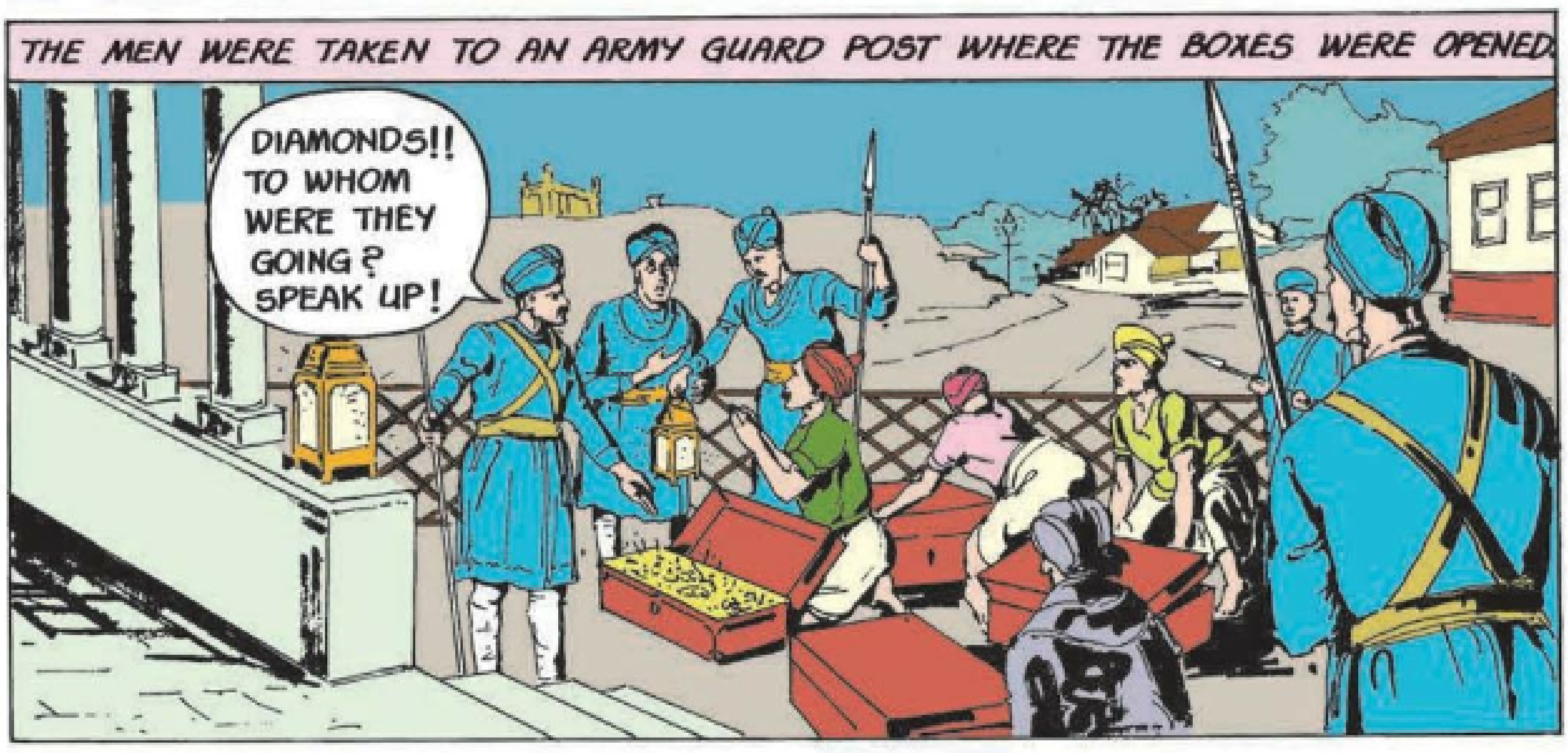

THIMMARASU WROTE A LETTER TO HIS SECRET AGENT INSIDE THE FORT.

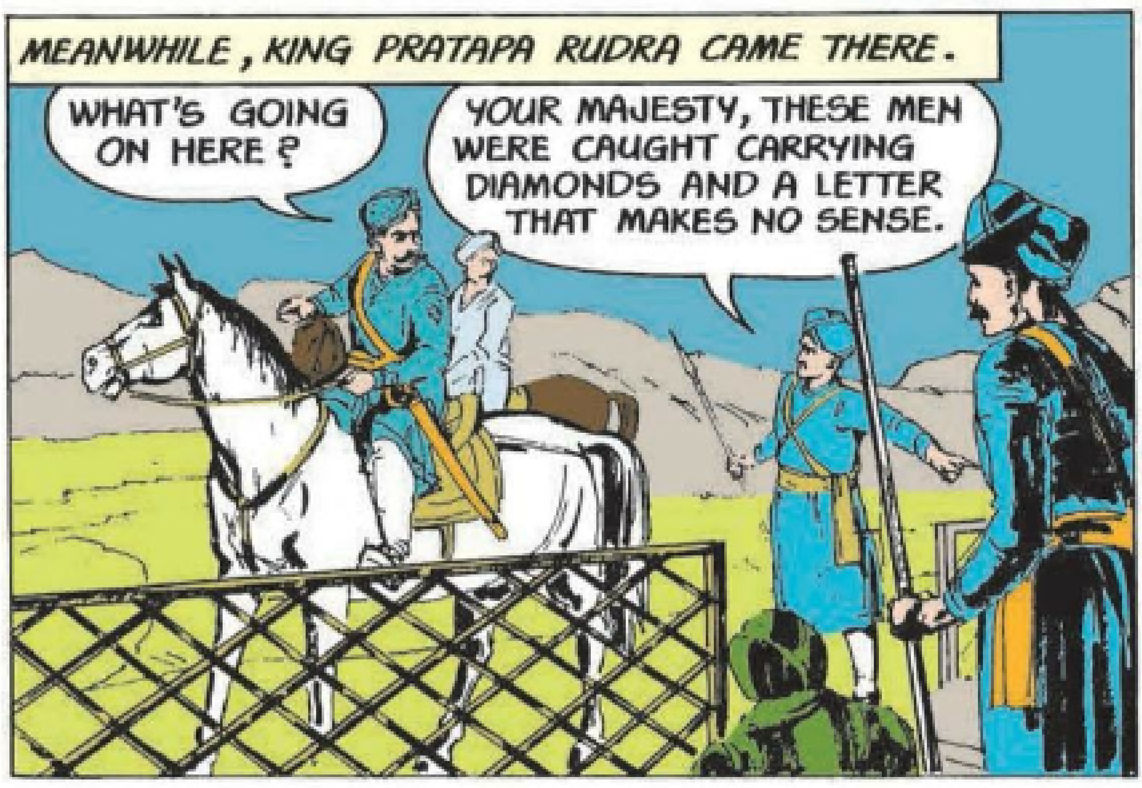

HE THEN TIED THE LETTER TO THE FOOT OF A HOMING PIGEON, AND SET IT FREE.

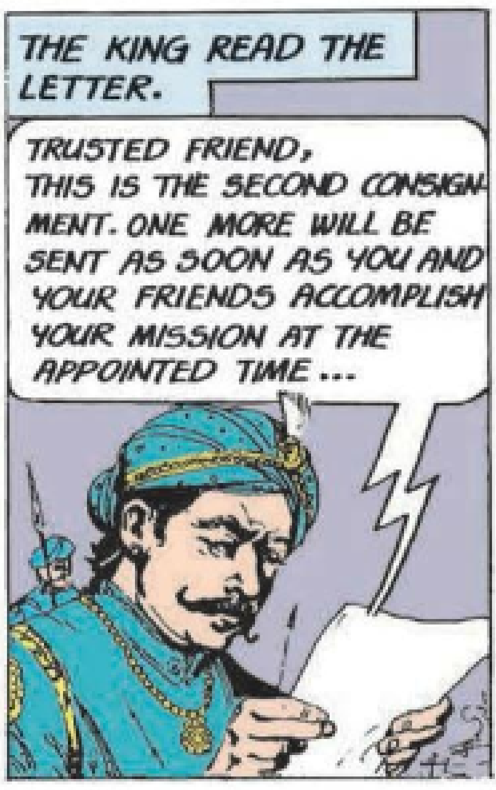

THE BIRD FLEW STRAIGHT TO THE AGENT.
WELCOME HOME! AND WHAT HAVE YOU HERE?

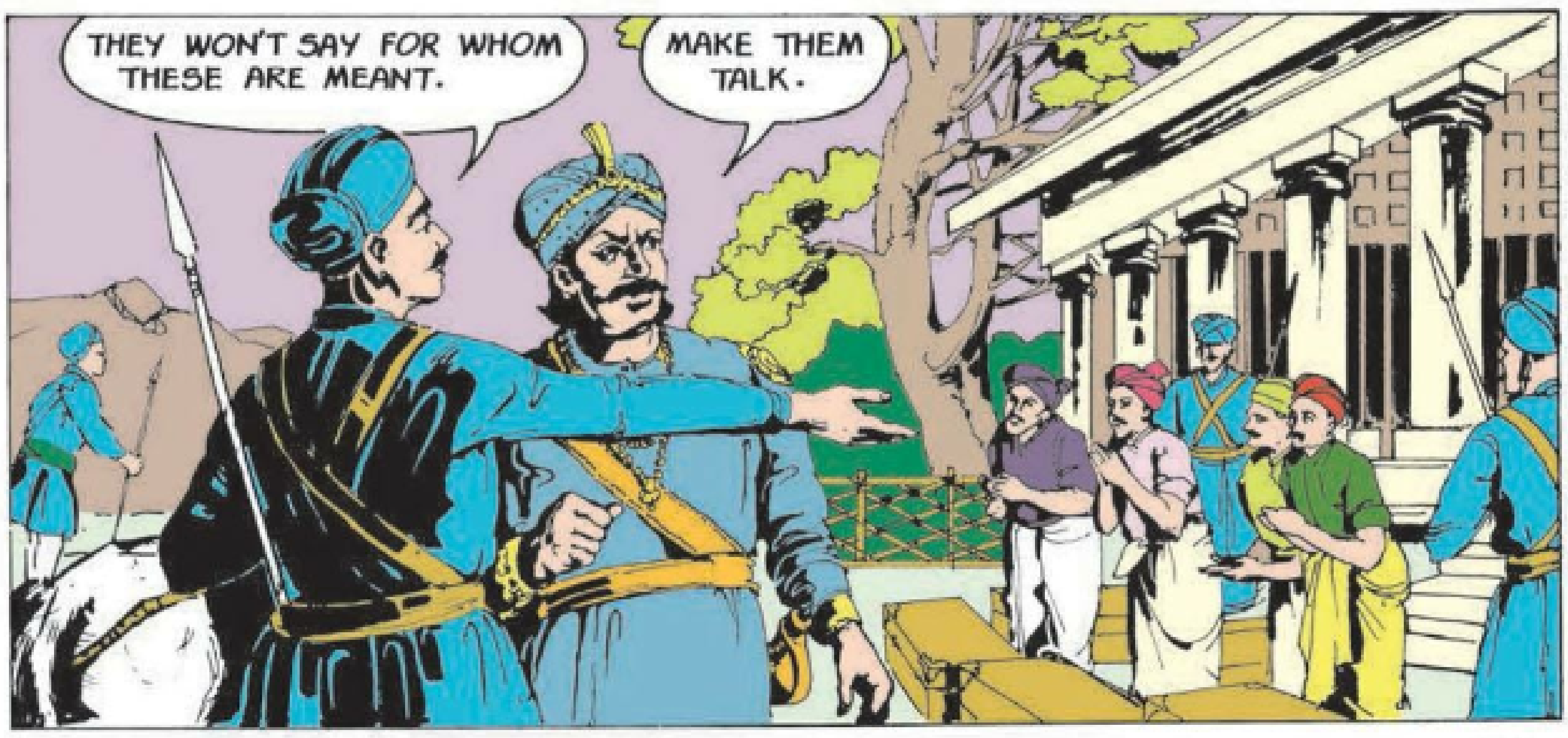

THE SECRET AGENT HAD A MEETING WITH HIS ASSOCIATES.
WE WILL CARRY OUT THE ORDERS TOMORROW NIGHT. IT SHOULD BE WELL-TIMED —WHEN PRATAPA RUDRA MAKES HIS ROUNDS.

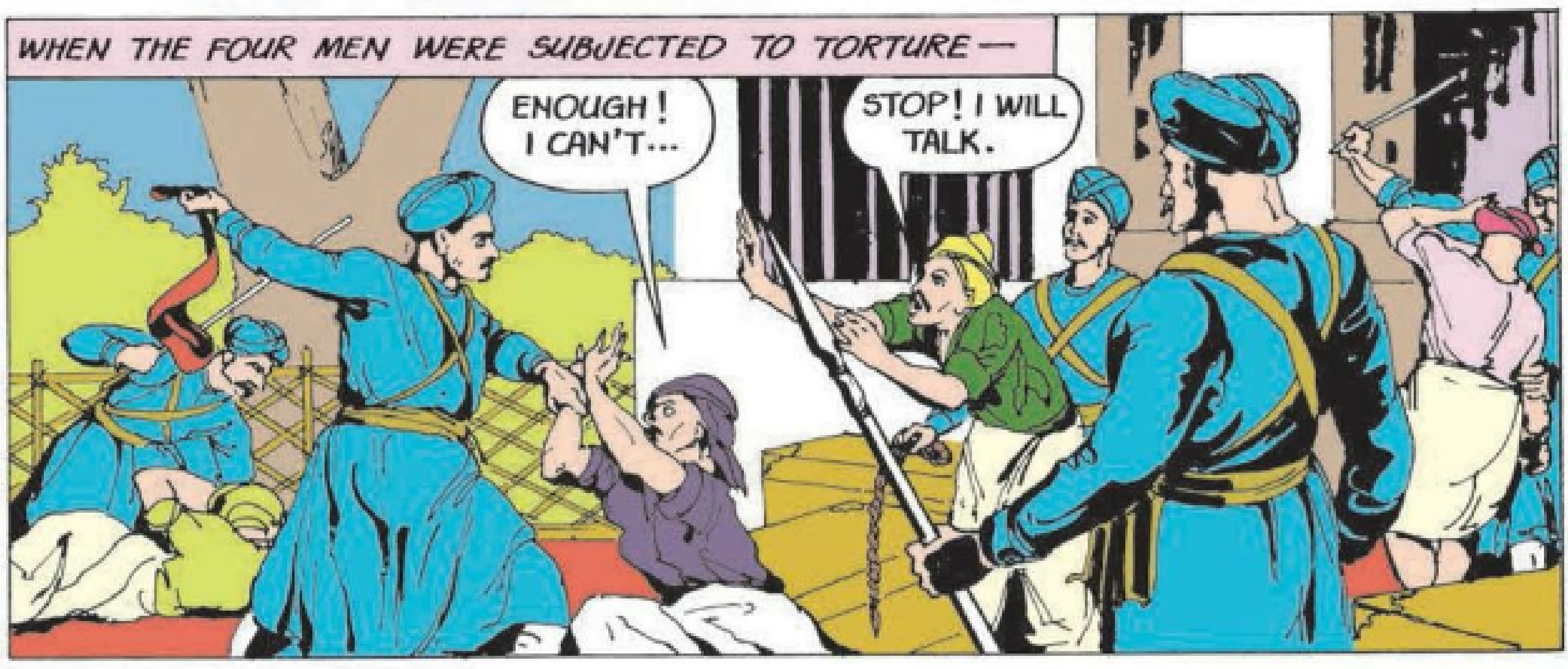

AT MIDNIGHT THE NEXT DAY —
STOP! WHAT ARE YOU CARRYING? OPEN THE BOXES.

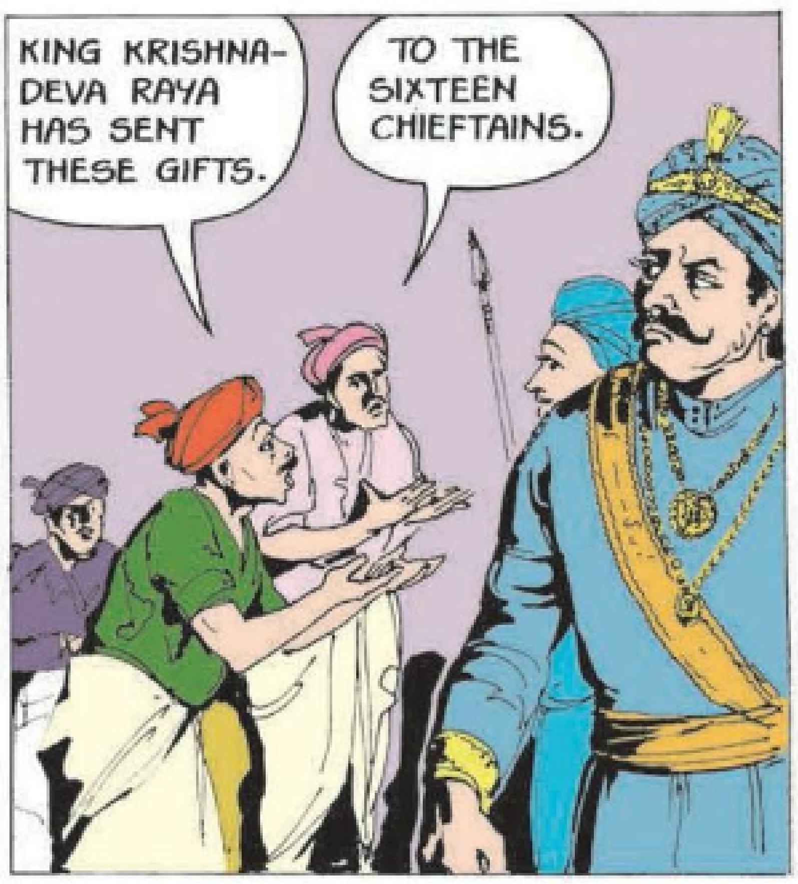

THE MEN WERE TAKEN TO AN ARMY GUARD POST WHERE THE BOXES WERE OPENED.
DIAMONDS!! TO WHOM WERE THEY GOING? SPEAK UP!

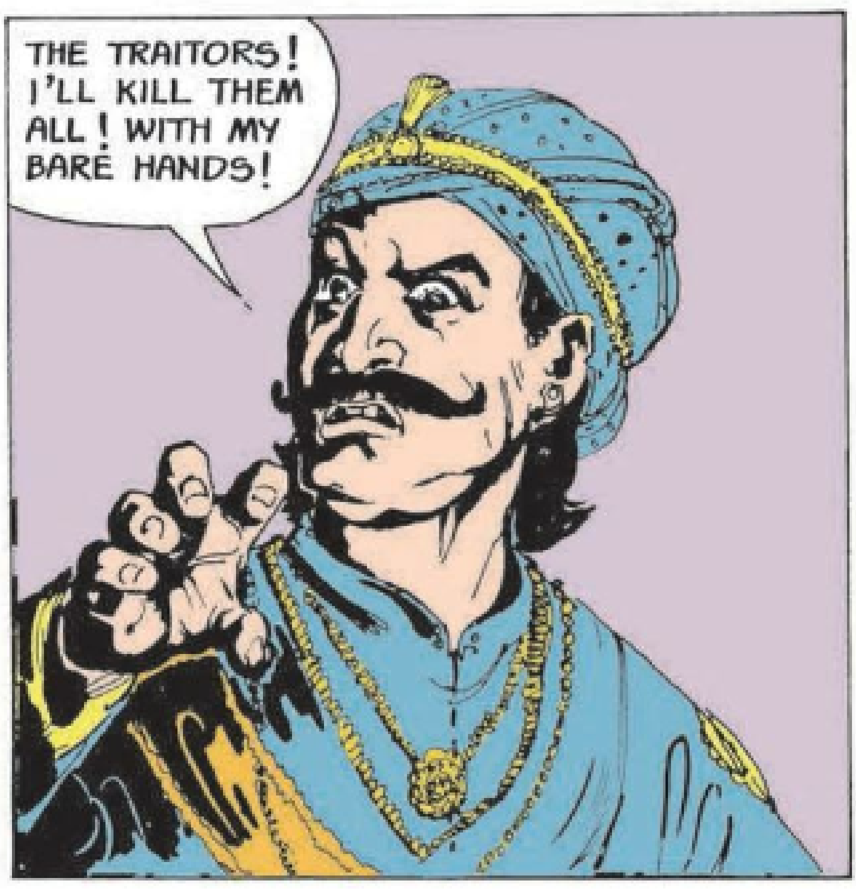

MEANWHILE, KING PRATAPA RUDRA CAME THERE.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
YOUR MAJESTY, THESE MEN WERE CAUGHT CARRYING DIAMONDS AND A LETTER THAT MAKES NO SENSE.

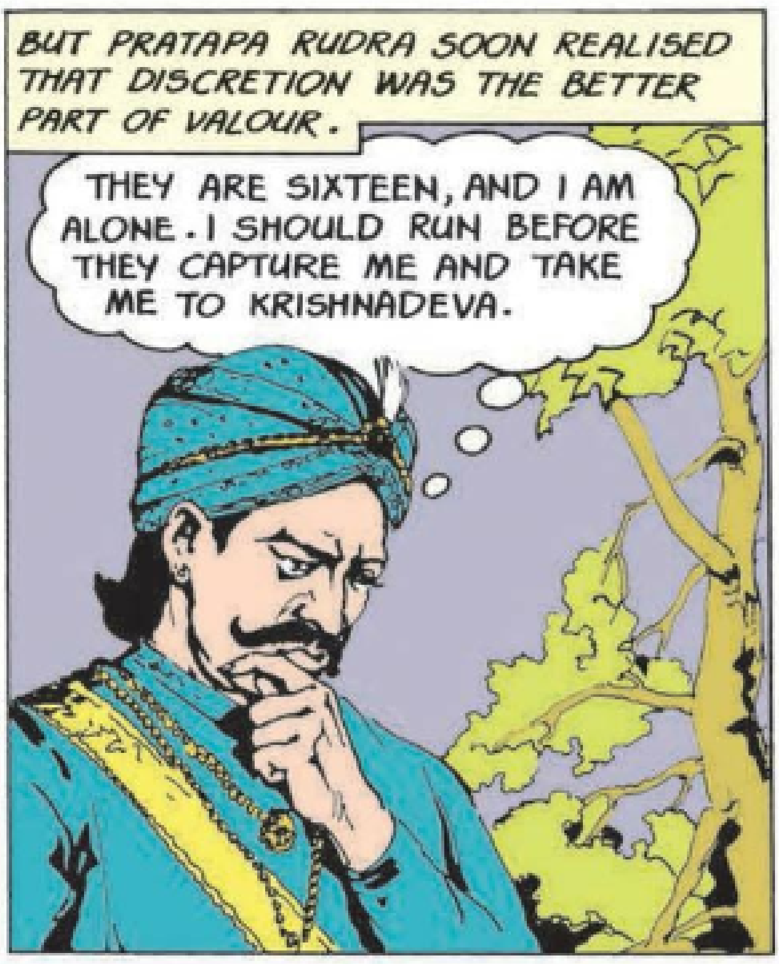

THE KING READ THE LETTER.
TRUSTED FRIEND, THIS IS THE SECOND CONSIGNMENT. ONE MORE WILL BE SENT AS SOON AS YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ACCOMPLISH YOUR MISSION AT THE APPOINTED TIME ...


THEY WON'T SAY FOR WHOM THESE ARE MEANT.
MAKE THEM TALK.


WHEN THE FOUR MEN WERE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE —
ENOUGH! I CAN'T...
STOP! I WILL TALK.

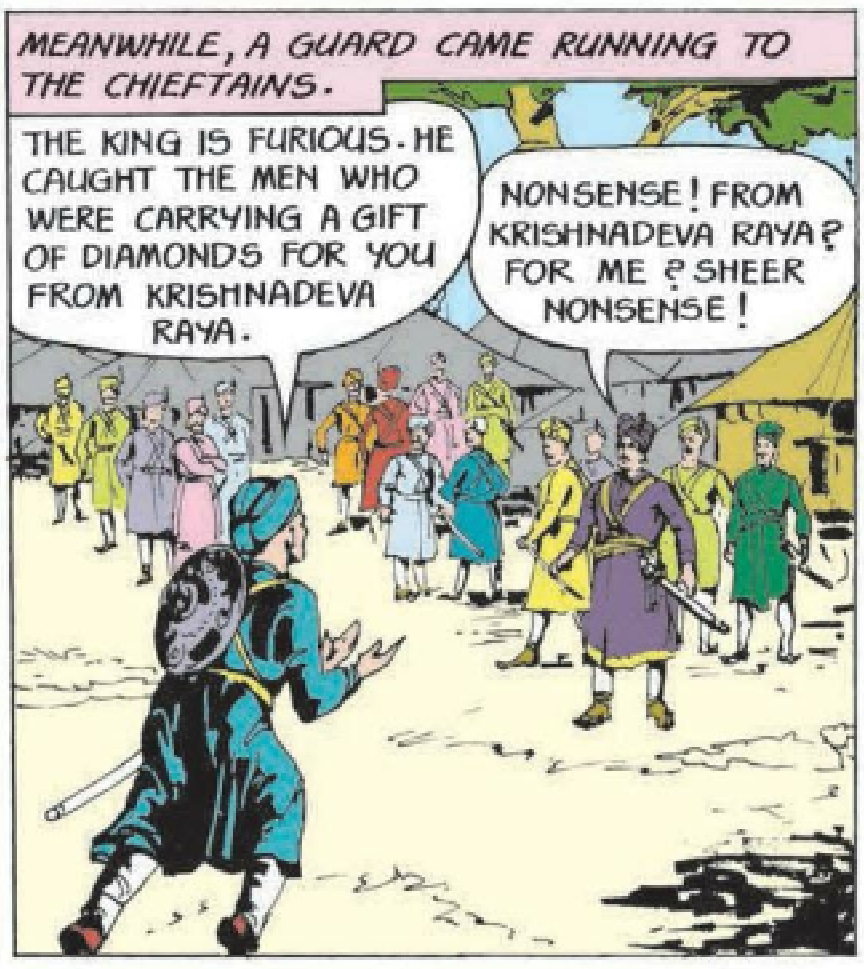

KING KRISHNADEVA RAYA HAS SENT THESE GIFTS.
TO THE SIXTEEN CHIEFTAINS.


THE TRAITORS! I'LL KILL THEM ALL! WITH MY BARE HANDS!



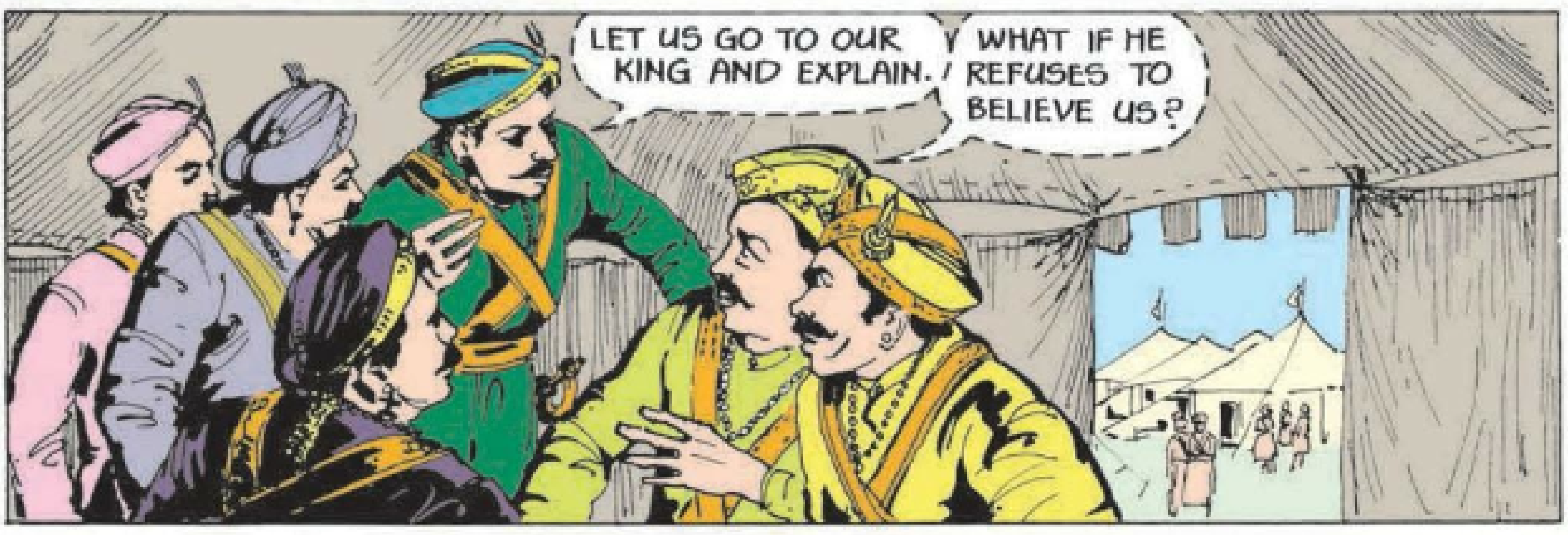
BUT PRATAPA RUDRA SOON REALISED THAT DISCRETION WAS THE BETTER PART OF VALOUR.

THEY ARE SIXTEEN, AND I AM ALONE. I SHOULD RUN BEFORE THEY CAPTURE ME AND TAKE ME TO KRISHNADEVA.

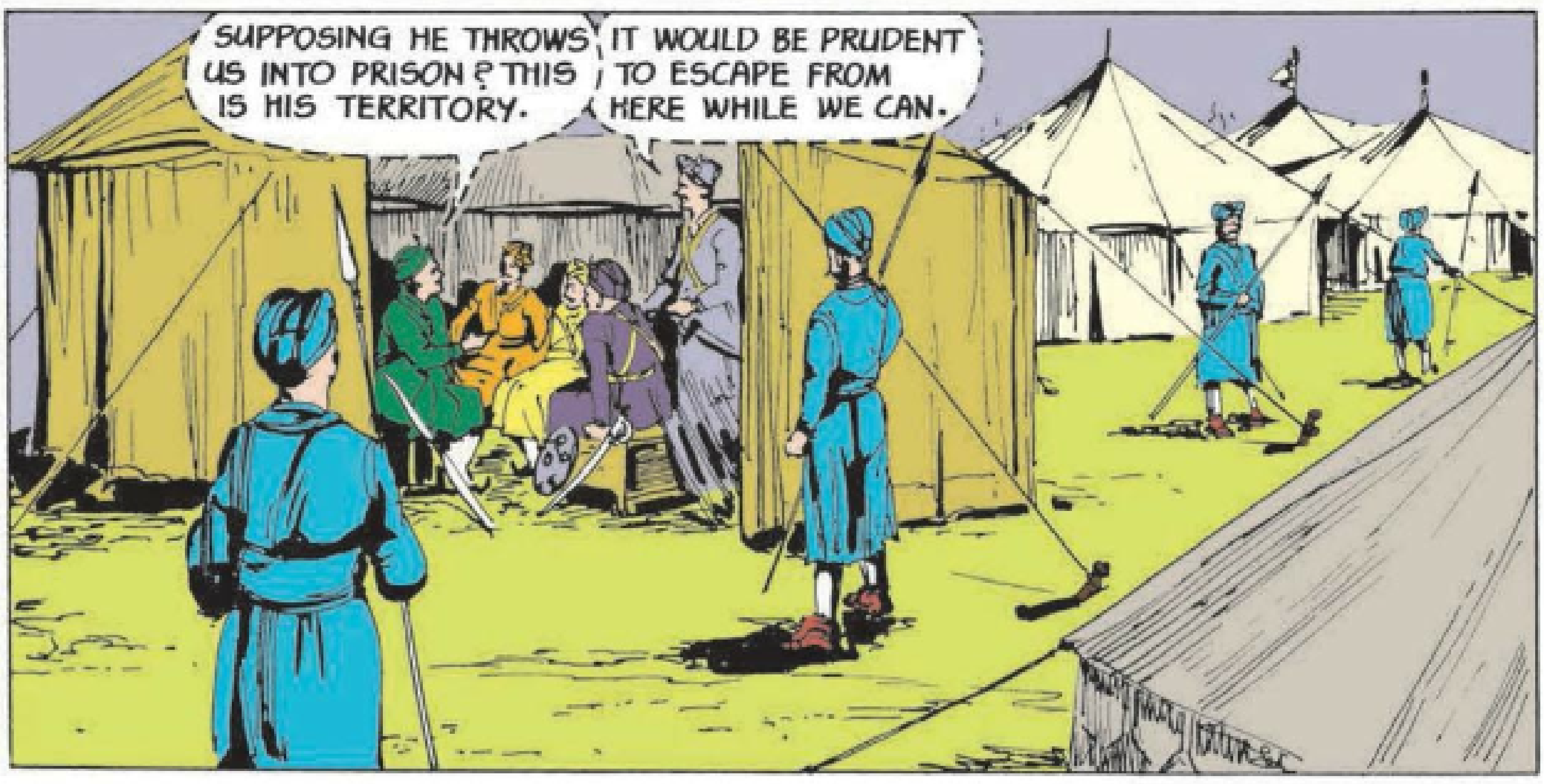


MEANWHILE, A GUARD CAME RUNNING TO THE CHIEFTAINS.

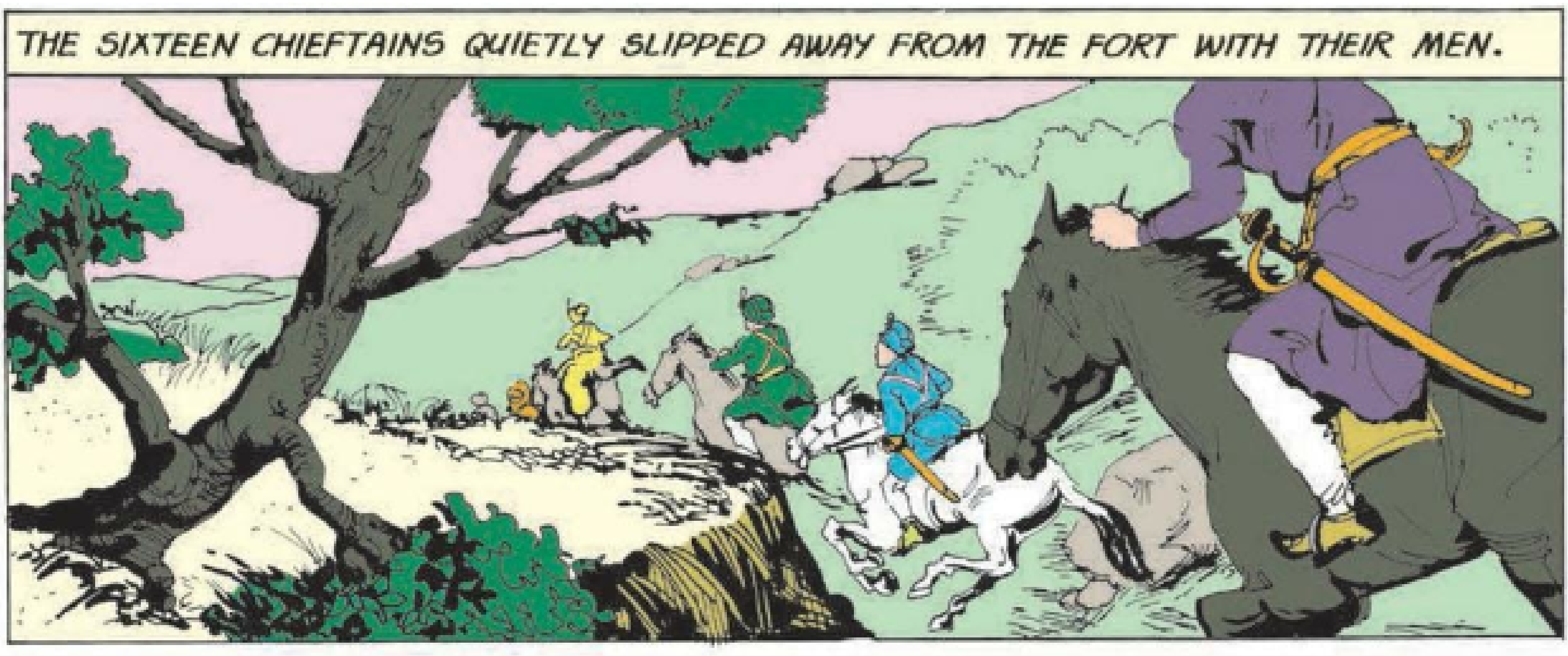
THE KING IS FURIOUS. HE CAUGHT THE MEN WHO WERE CARRYING A GIFT OF DIAMONDS FOR YOU FROM KRISHNADEVA RAYA.
NONSENSE! FROM KRISHNADEVA RAYA? FOR ME? SHEER NONSENSE!



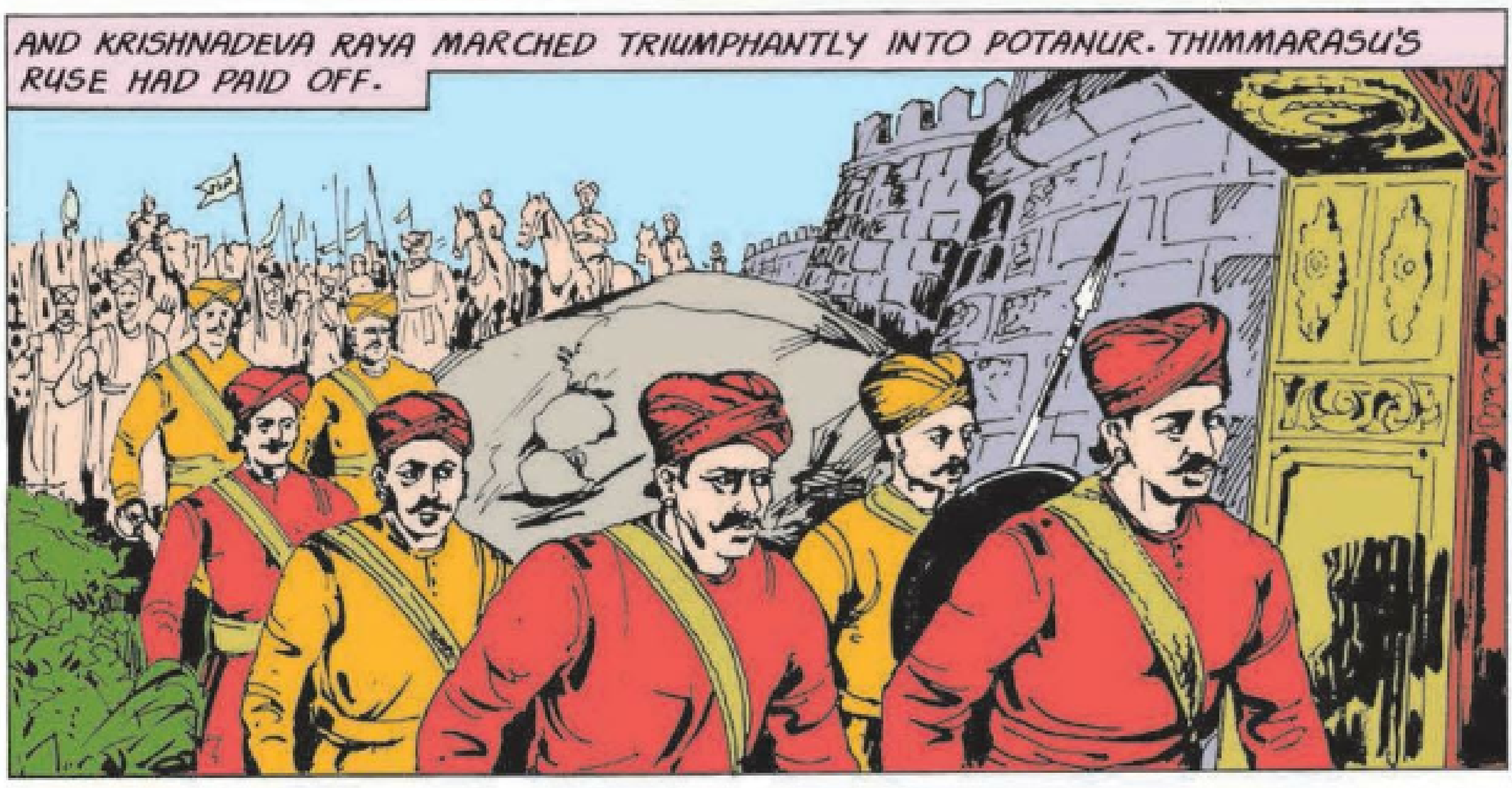
LET US GO TO OUR KING AND EXPLAIN.
WHAT IF HE REFUSES TO BELIEVE US?



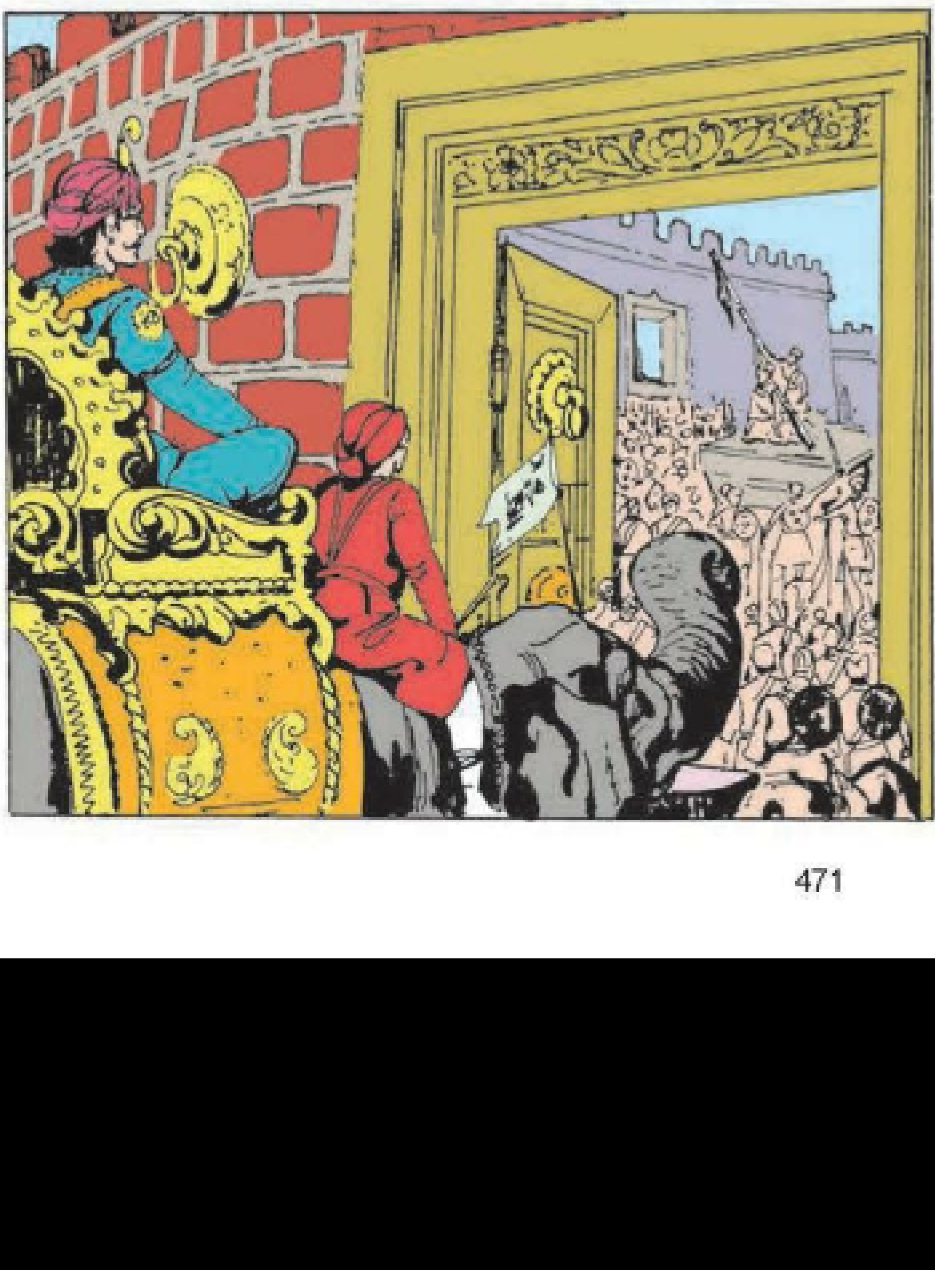
SUPPOSING HE THROWS US INTO PRISON? THIS IS HIS TERRITORY.
IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO ESCAPE FROM HERE WHILE WE CAN.

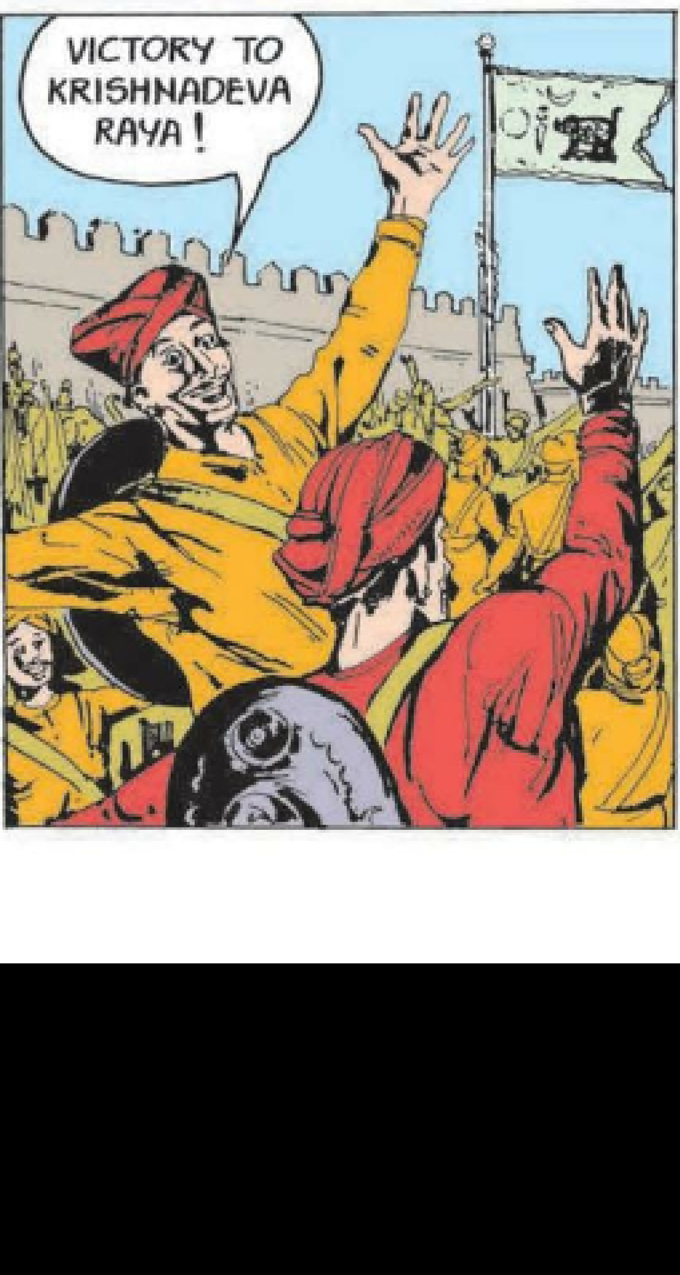


THE SIXTEEN CHIEFTAINS QUIETLY SLIPPED AWAY FROM THE FORT WITH THEIR MEN.

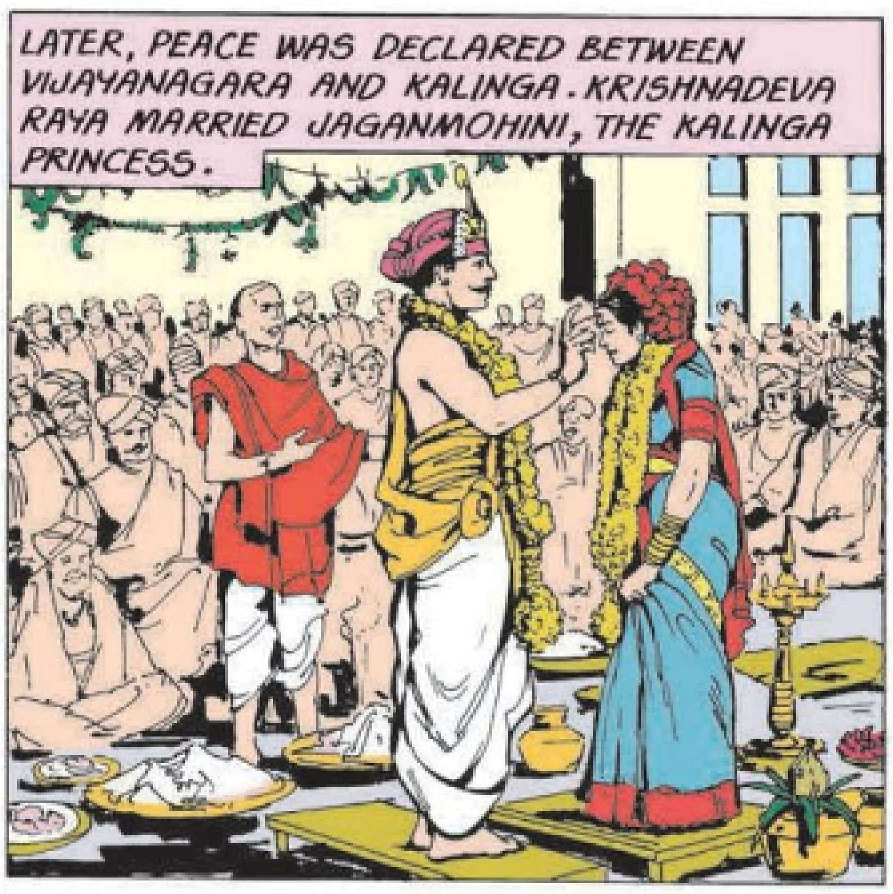


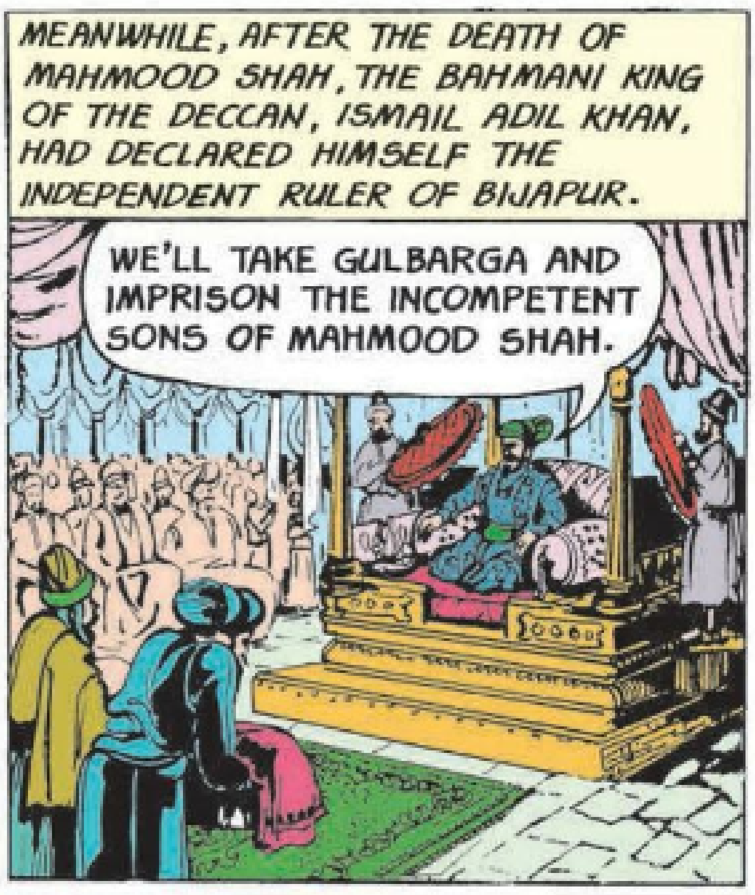
AND KRISHNADEVA RAYA MARCHED TRIUMPHANTLY INTO POTANUR. THIMMARASU'S RUSE HAD PAID OFF.

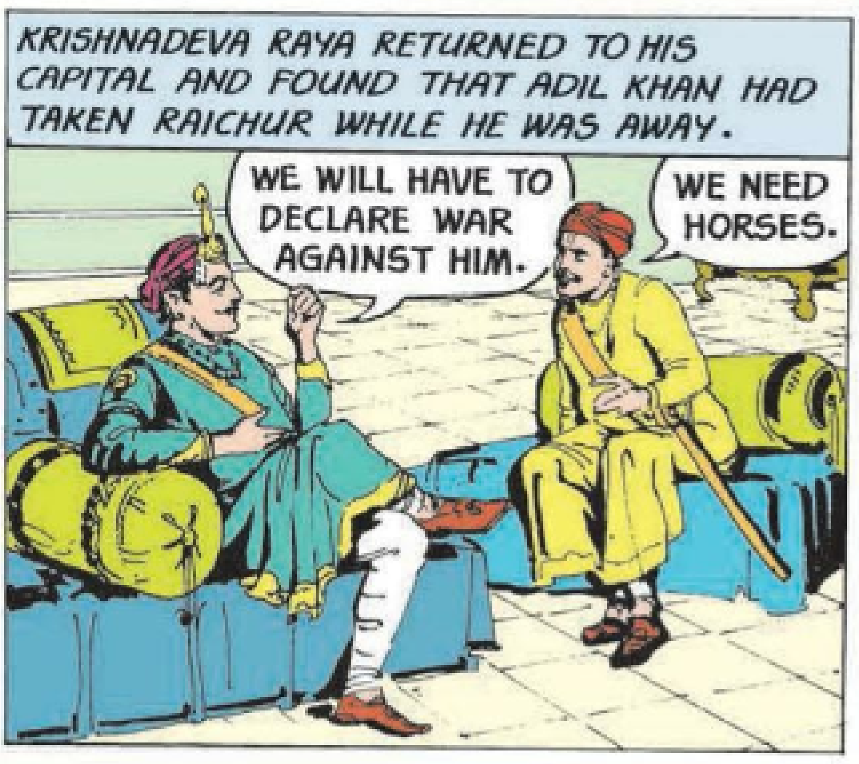


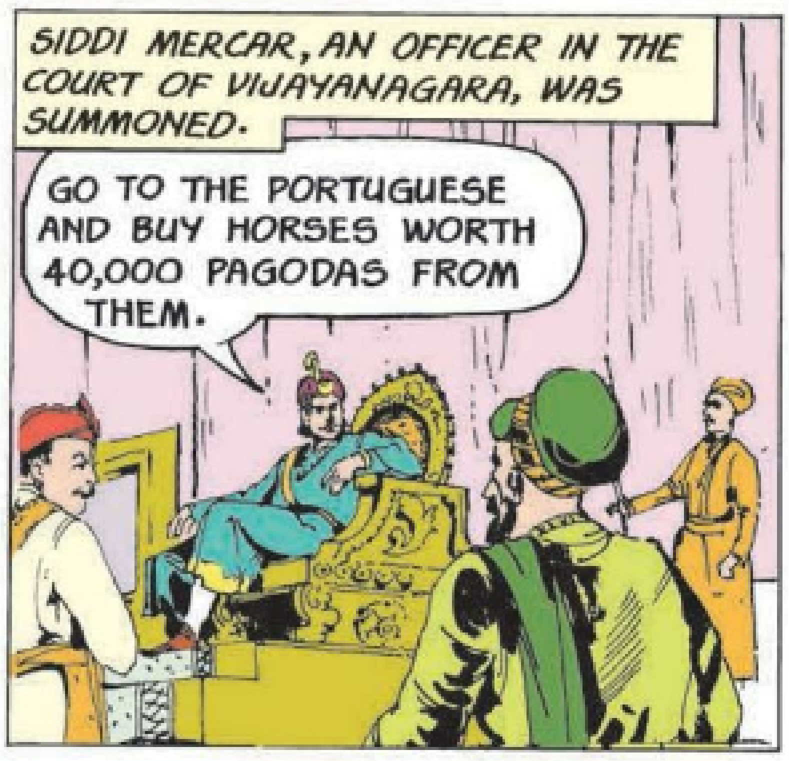


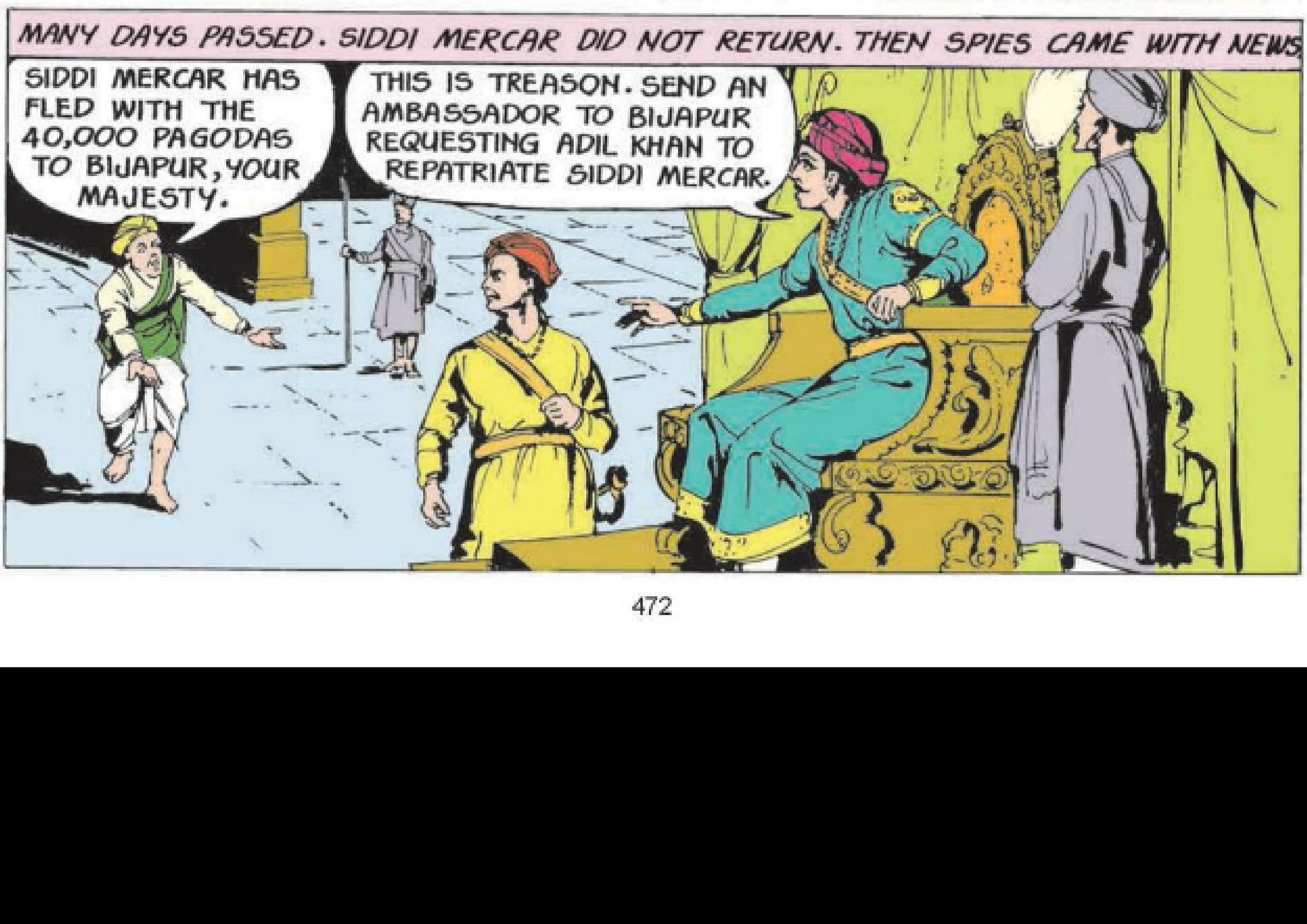
VICTORY TO KRISHNADEVA RAYA!

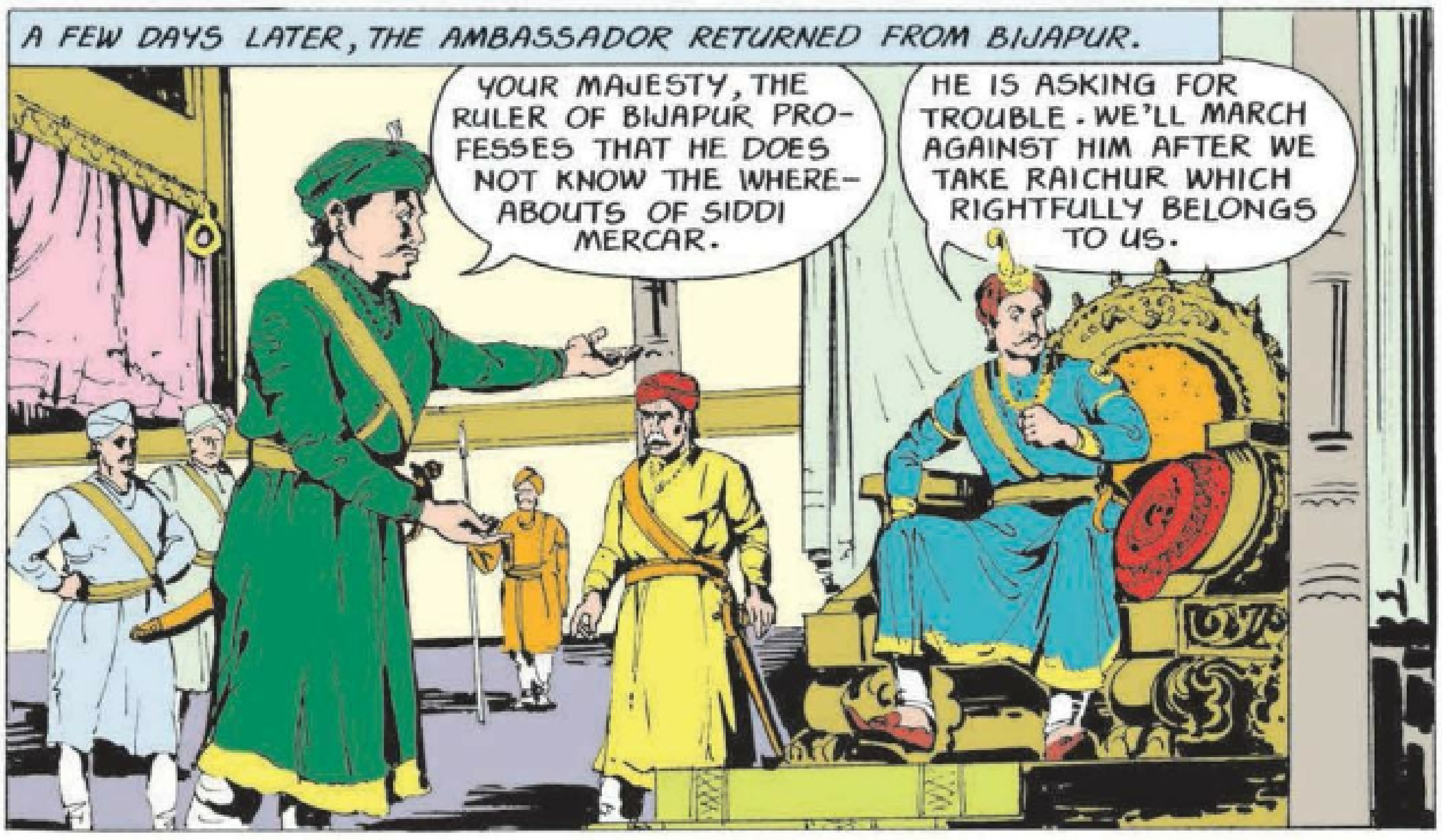

LATER, PEACE WAS DECLARED BETWEEN VIJAYANAGARA AND KALINGA. KRISHNADEVA RAYA MARRIED JAGANMOHINI, THE KALINGA PRINCESS.

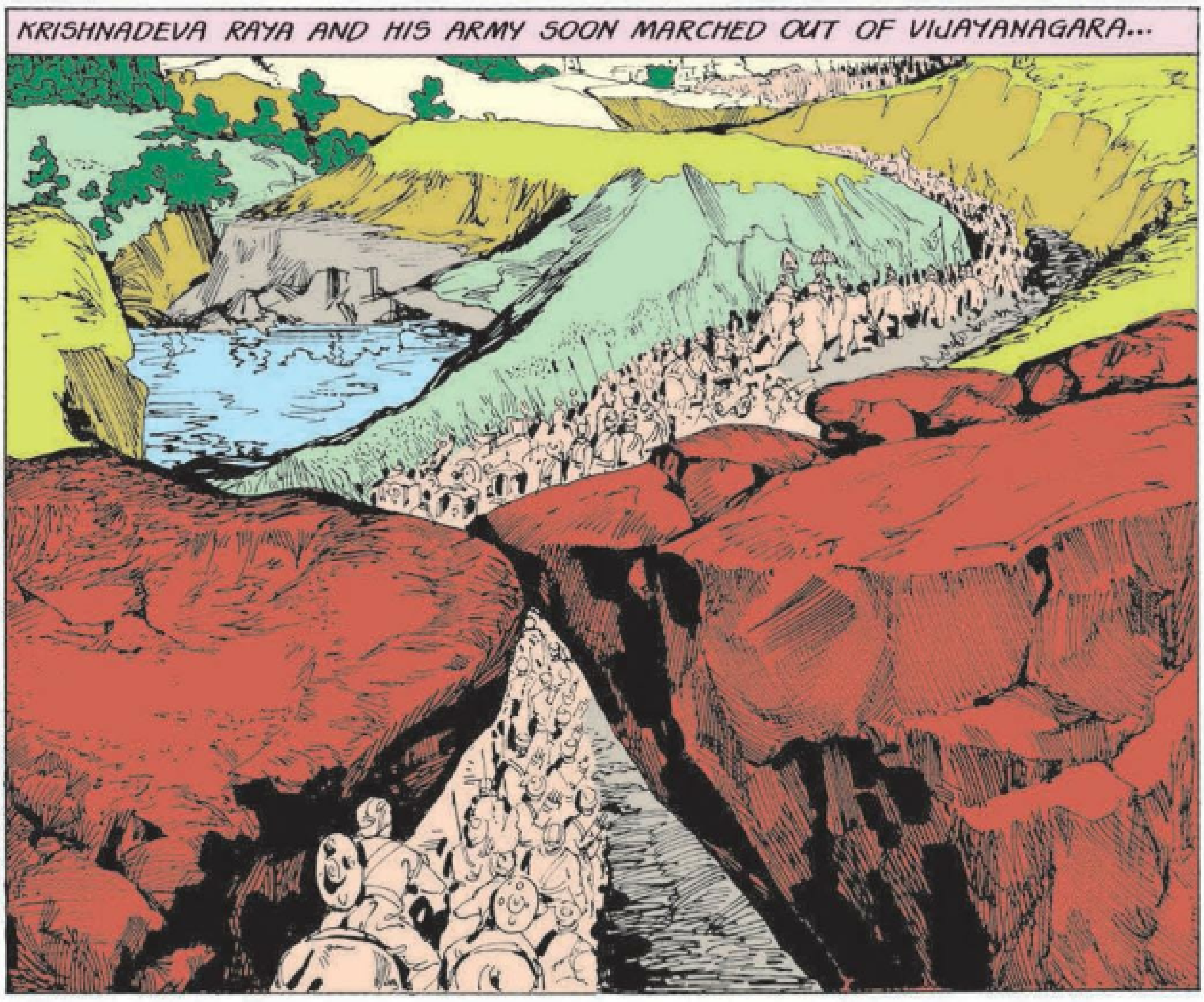

MEANWHILE, AFTER THE DEATH OF MAHMOOD SHAH, THE BAHMANI KING OF THE DECCAN, ISMAIL ADIL KHAN, HAD DECLARED HIMSELF THE INDEPENDENT RULER OF BIJAPUR.
WE'LL TAKE GULBARGA AND IMPRISON THE INCOMPETENT SONS OF MAHMOOD SHAH.

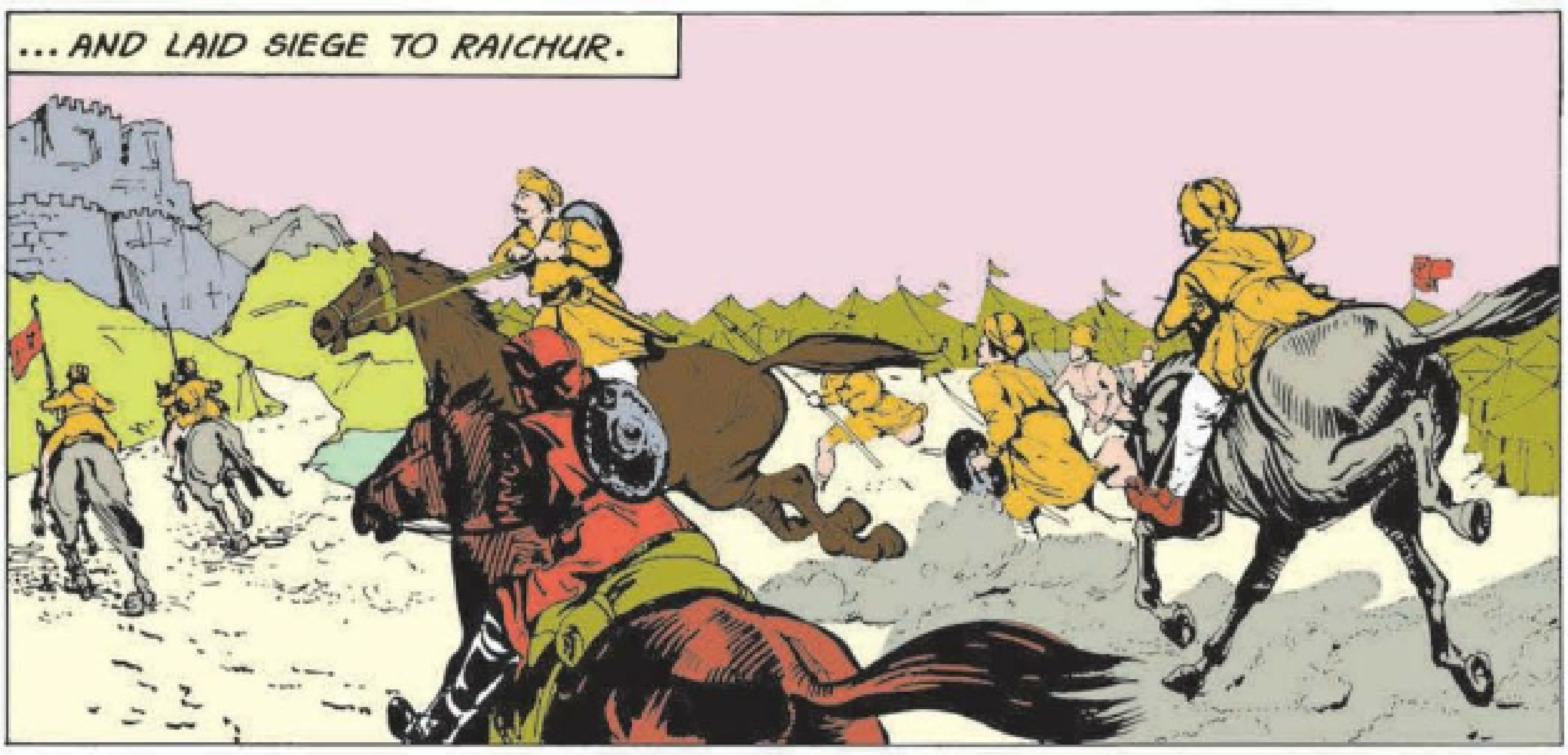

KRISHNADEVA RAYA RETURNED TO HIS CAPITAL AND FOUND THAT ADIL KHAN HAD TAKEN RAICHUR WHILE HE WAS AWAY.
WE WILL HAVE TO DECLARE WAR AGAINST HIM.
WE NEED HORSES.

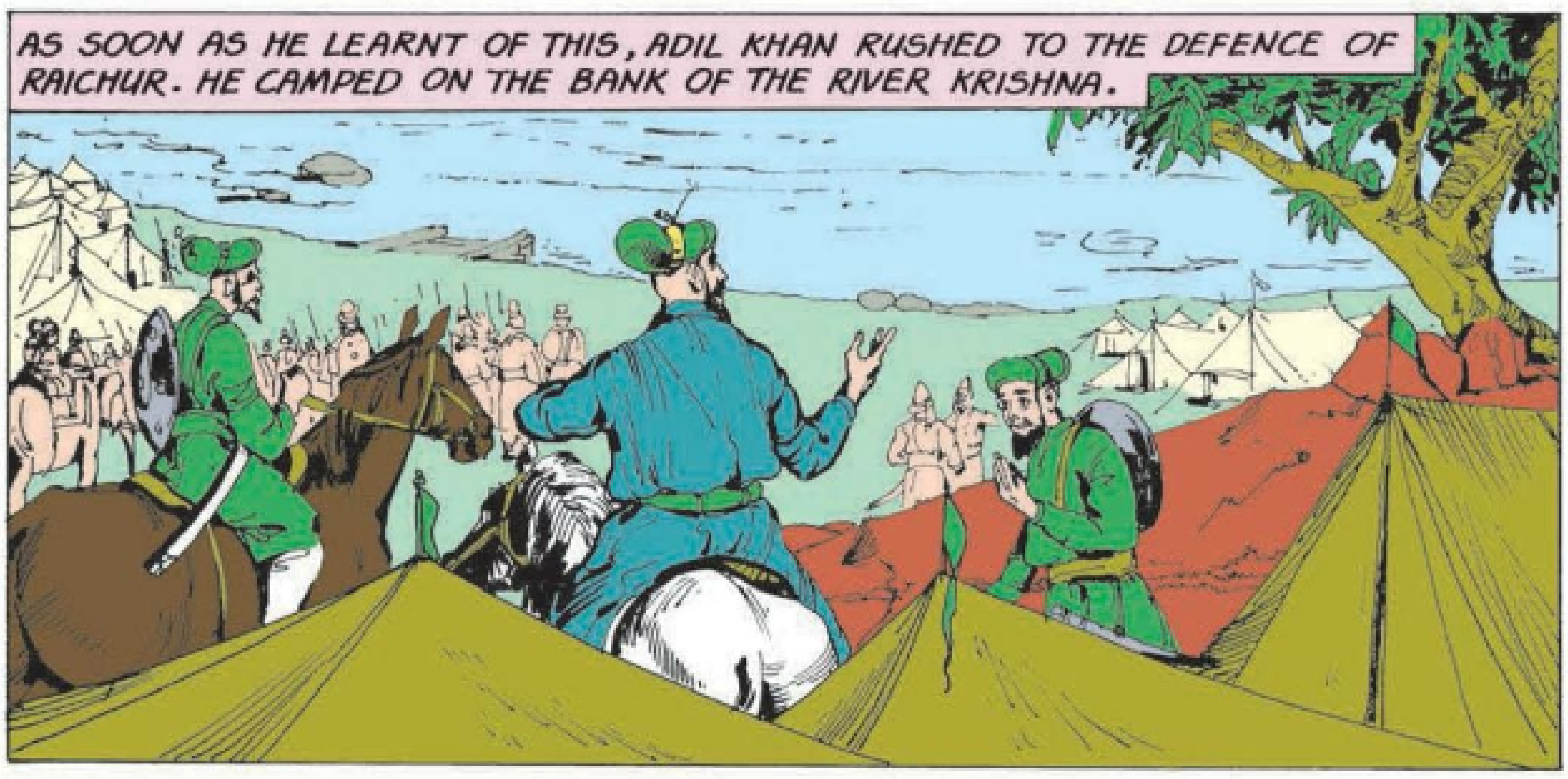

SIDDI MERCAR, AN OFFICER IN THE COURT OF VIJAYANAGARA, WAS SUMMONED.
GO TO THE PORTUGUESE AND BUY HORSES WORTH 40,000 PAGODAS FROM THEM.

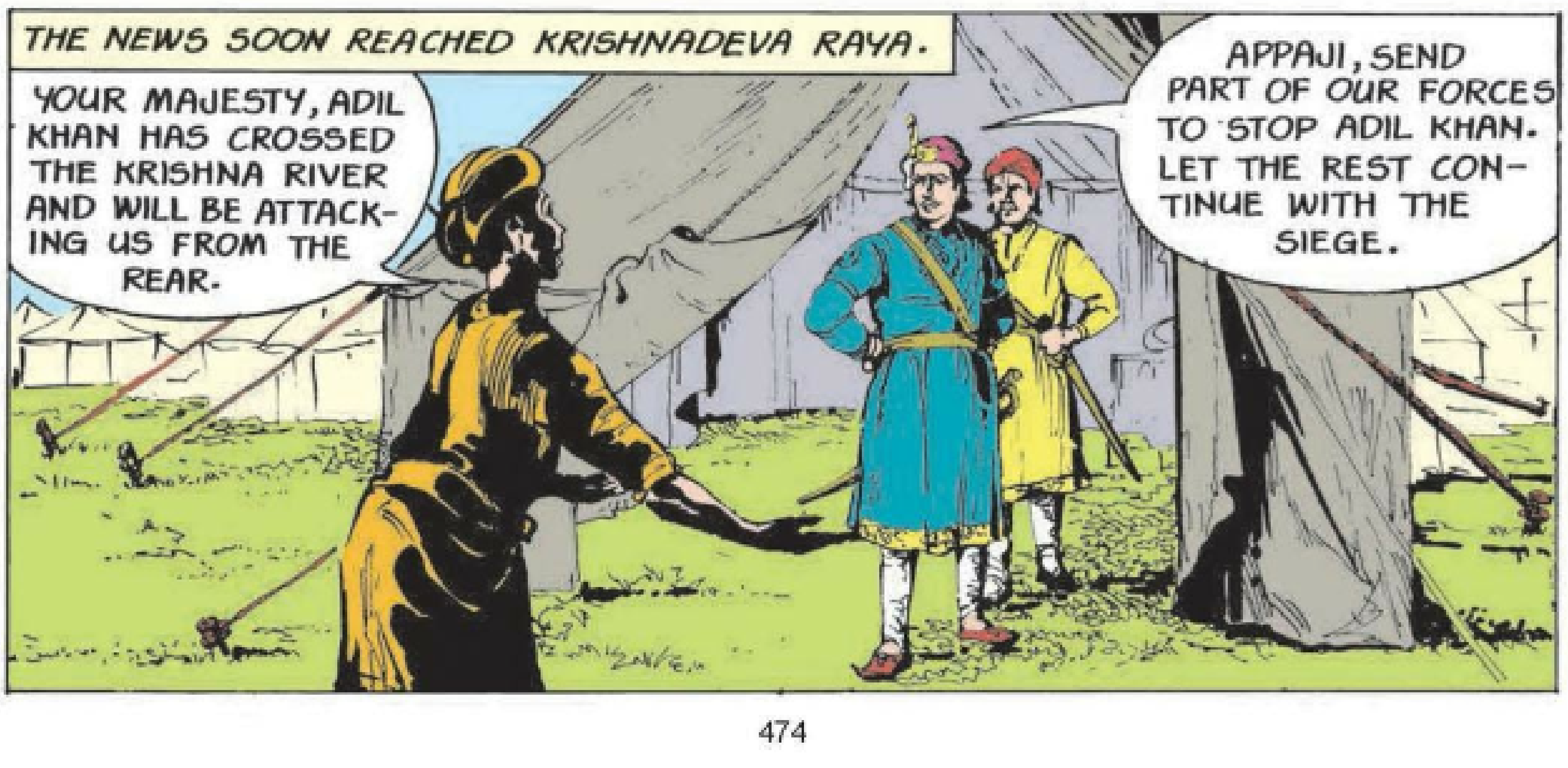

MANY DAYS PASSED. SIDDI MERCAR DID NOT RETURN. THEN SPIES CAME WITH NEWS.
SIDDI MERCAR HAS FLED WITH THE 40,000 PAGODAS TO BIJAPUR, YOUR MAJESTY.
THIS IS TREASON. SEND AN AMBASSADOR TO BIJAPUR REQUESTING ADIL KHAN TO REPATRIATE SIDDI MERCAR.

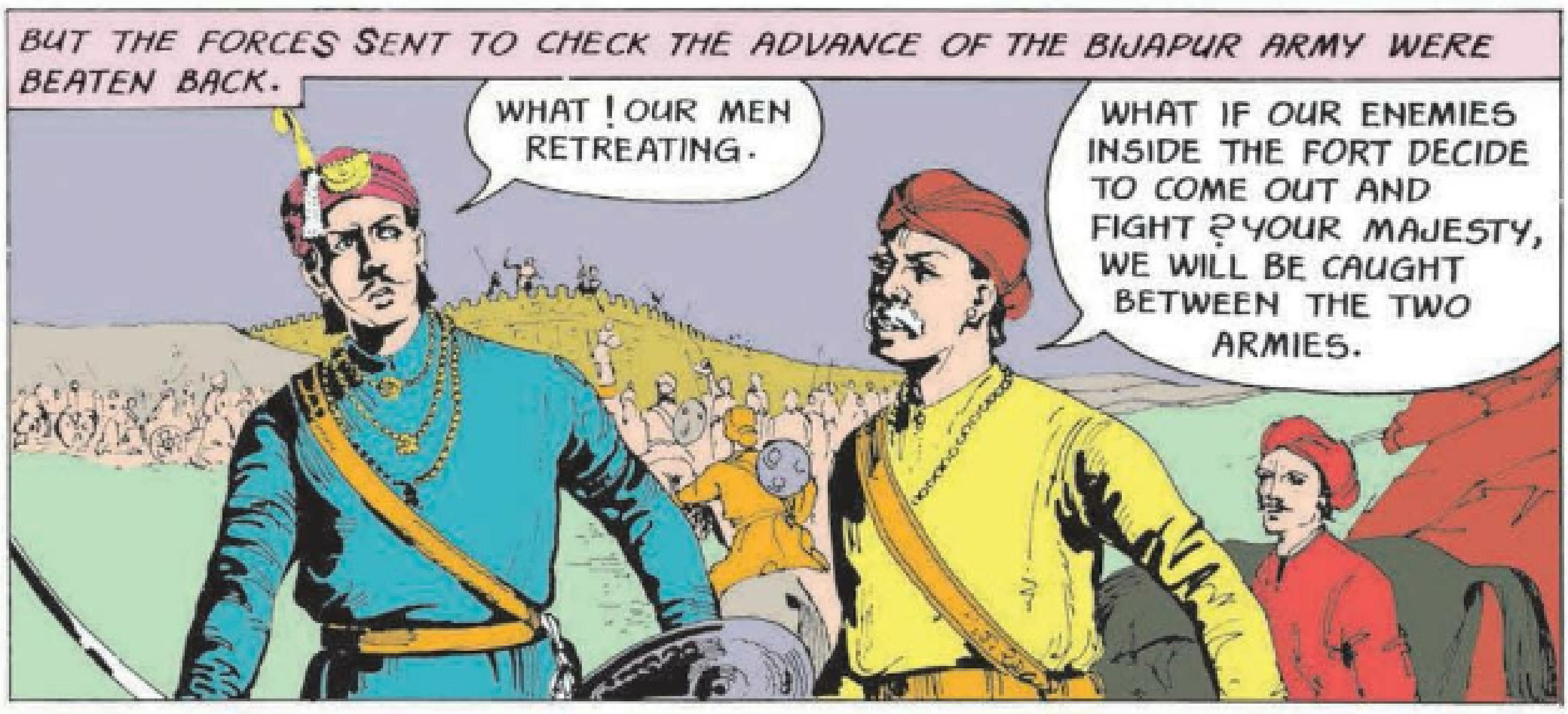

A FEW DAYS LATER, THE AMBASSADOR RETURNED FROM BIJAPUR.
YOUR MAJESTY, THE RULER OF BIJAPUR PROFESSES THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF SIDDI MERCAR.
HE IS ASKING FOR TROUBLE. WE'LL MARCH AGAINST HIM AFTER WE TAKE RAICHUR WHICH RIGHTFULLY BELONGS TO US.


KRISHNADEVA RAYA AND HIS ARMY SOON MARCHED OUT OF VIJAYANAGARA...


...AND LAID SIEGE TO RAICHUR.

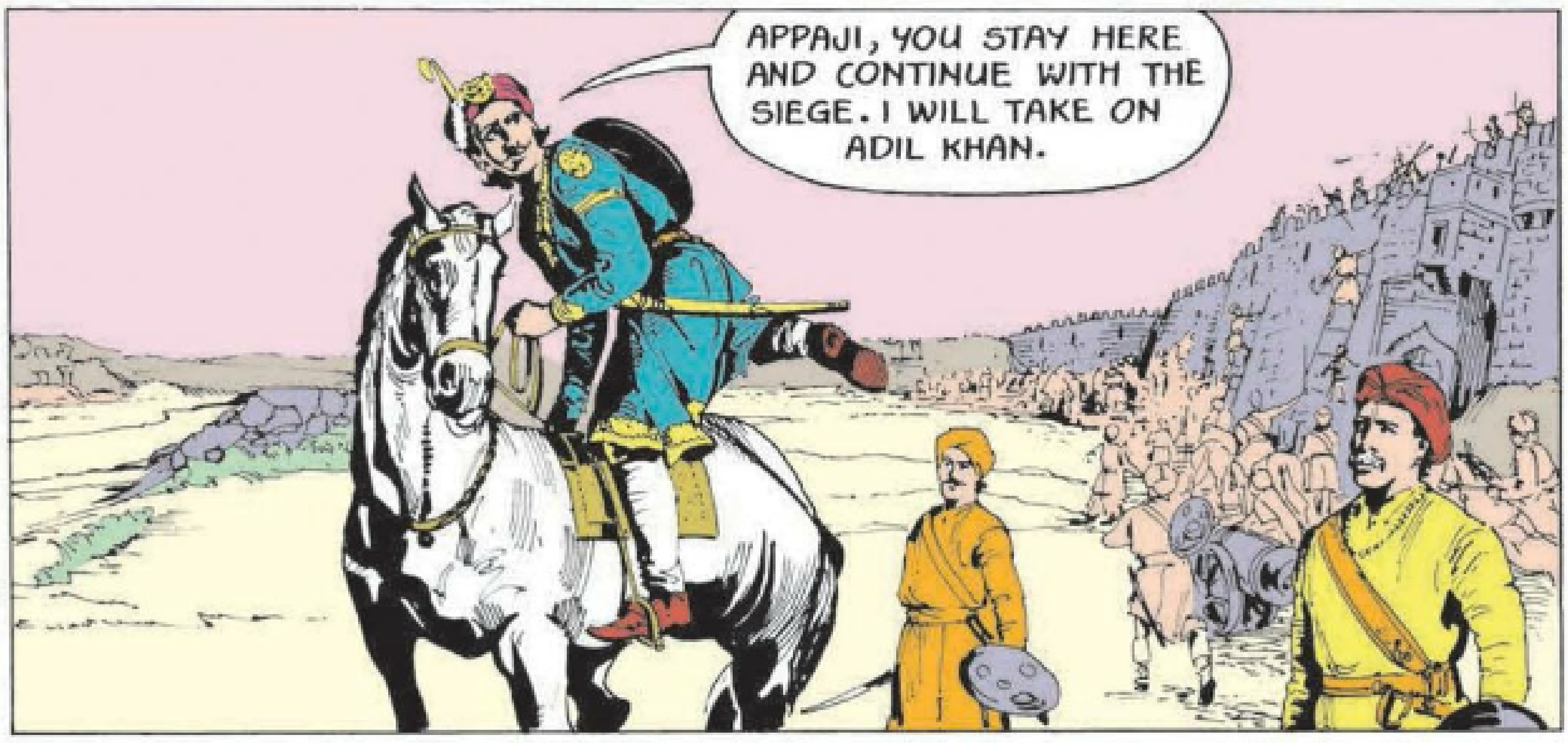

AS SOON AS HE LEARNT OF THIS, ADIL KHAN RUSHED TO THE DEFENCE OF RAICHUR. HE CAMPED ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER KRISHNA.


THE NEWS SOON REACHED KRISHNADEVA RAYA.
YOUR MAJESTY, ADIL KHAN HAS CROSSED THE KRISHNA RIVER AND WILL BE ATTACKING US FROM THE REAR.
APPAJI, SEND PART OF OUR FORCES TO STOP ADIL KHAN. LET THE REST CONTINUE WITH THE SIEGE.

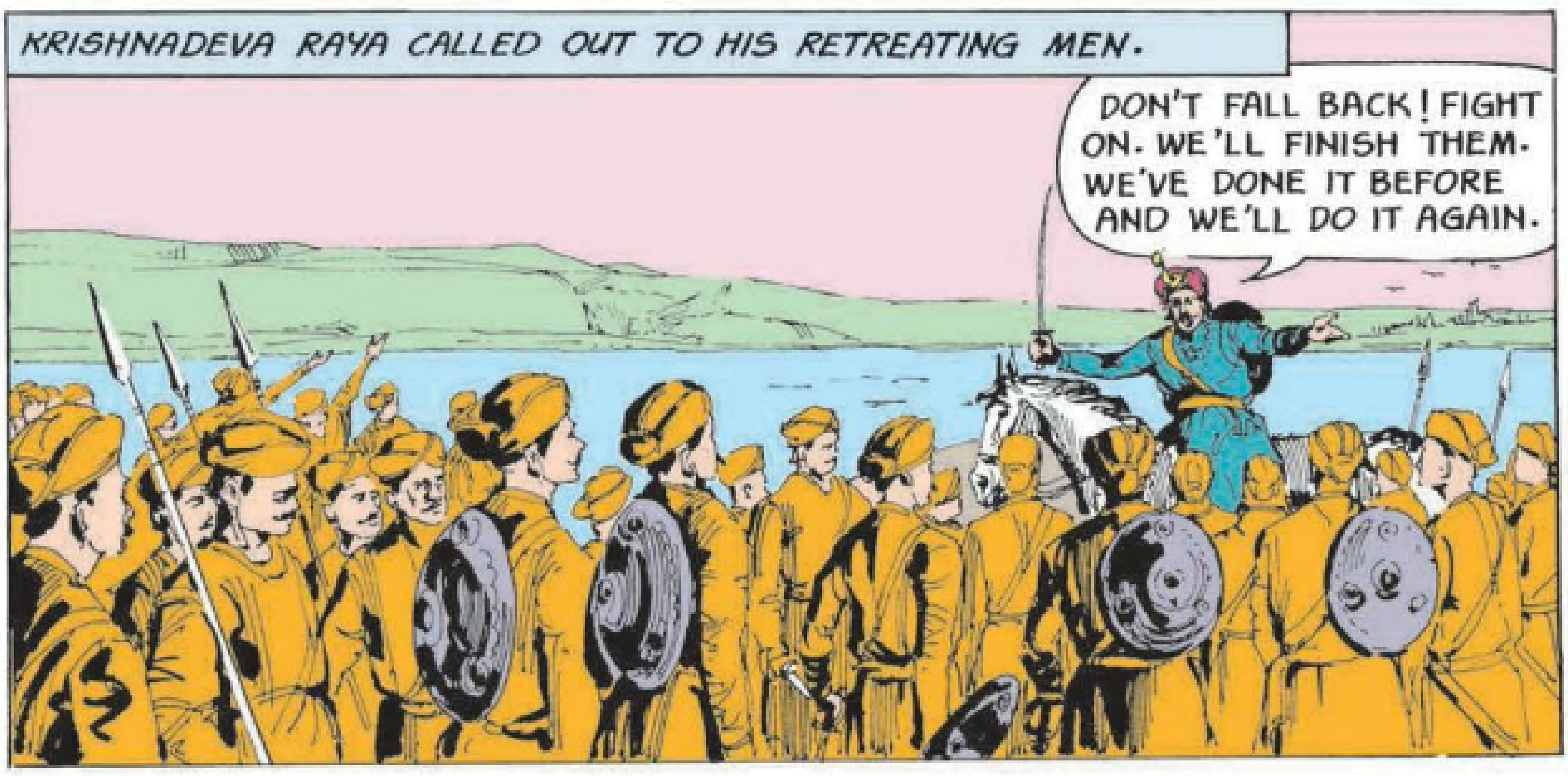


BUT THE FORCES SENT TO CHECK THE ADVANCE OF THE BIJAPUR ARMY WERE BEATEN BACK.

WHAT ! OUR MEN RETREATING.
WHAT IF OUR ENEMIES INSIDE THE FORT DECIDE TO COME OUT AND FIGHT ? YOUR MAJESTY, WE WILL BE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES.

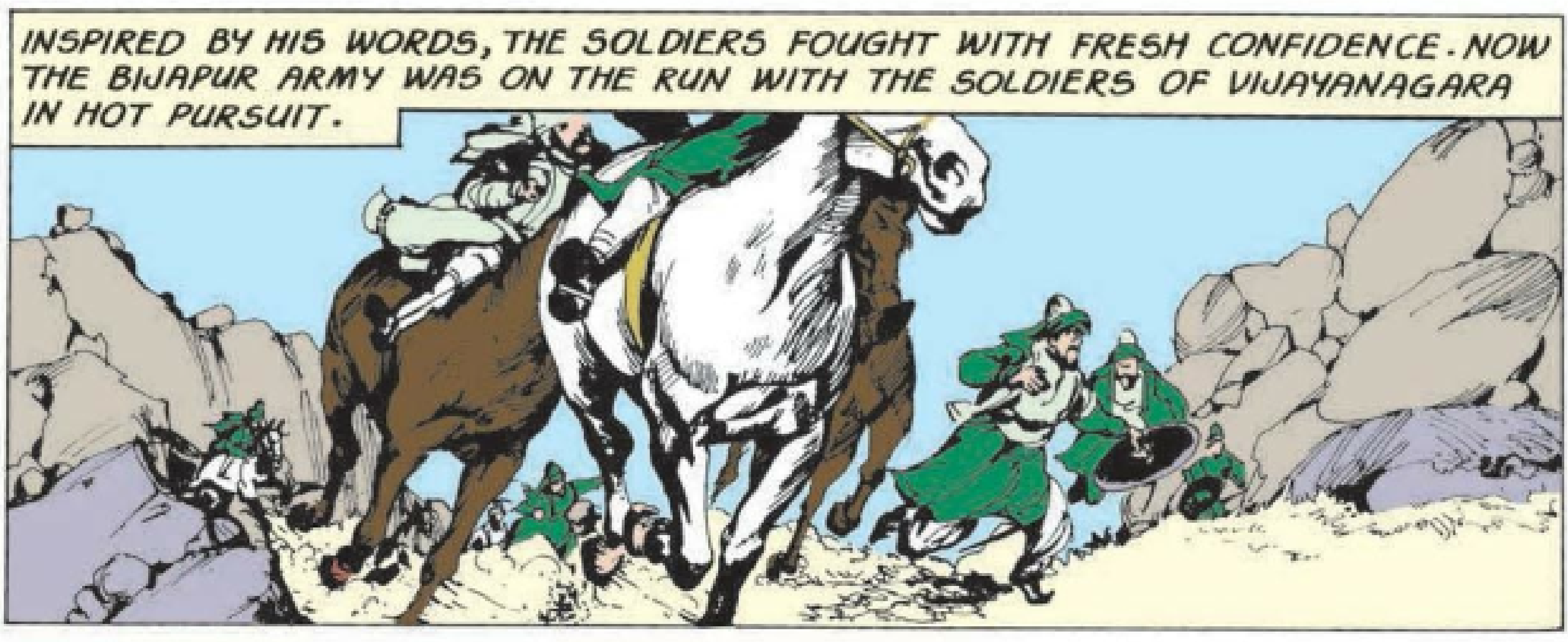


APPAJI, YOU STAY HERE AND CONTINUE WITH THE SIEGE. I WILL TAKE ON ADIL KHAN.

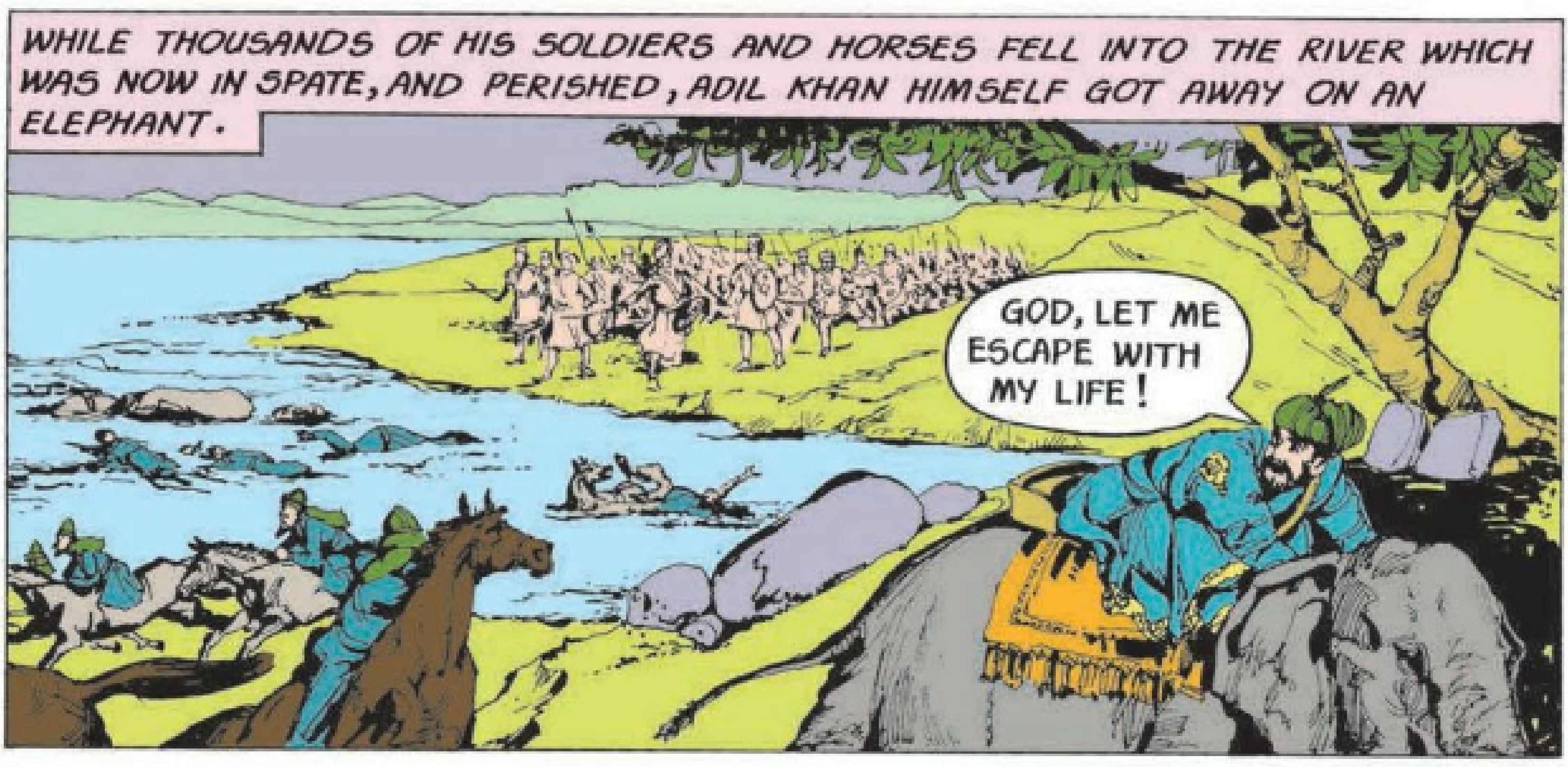


KRISHNADEVA RAYA CALLED OUT TO HIS RETREATING MEN.

DON'T FALL BACK ! FIGHT ON. WE'LL FINISH THEM. WE'VE DONE IT BEFORE AND WE'LL DO IT AGAIN.

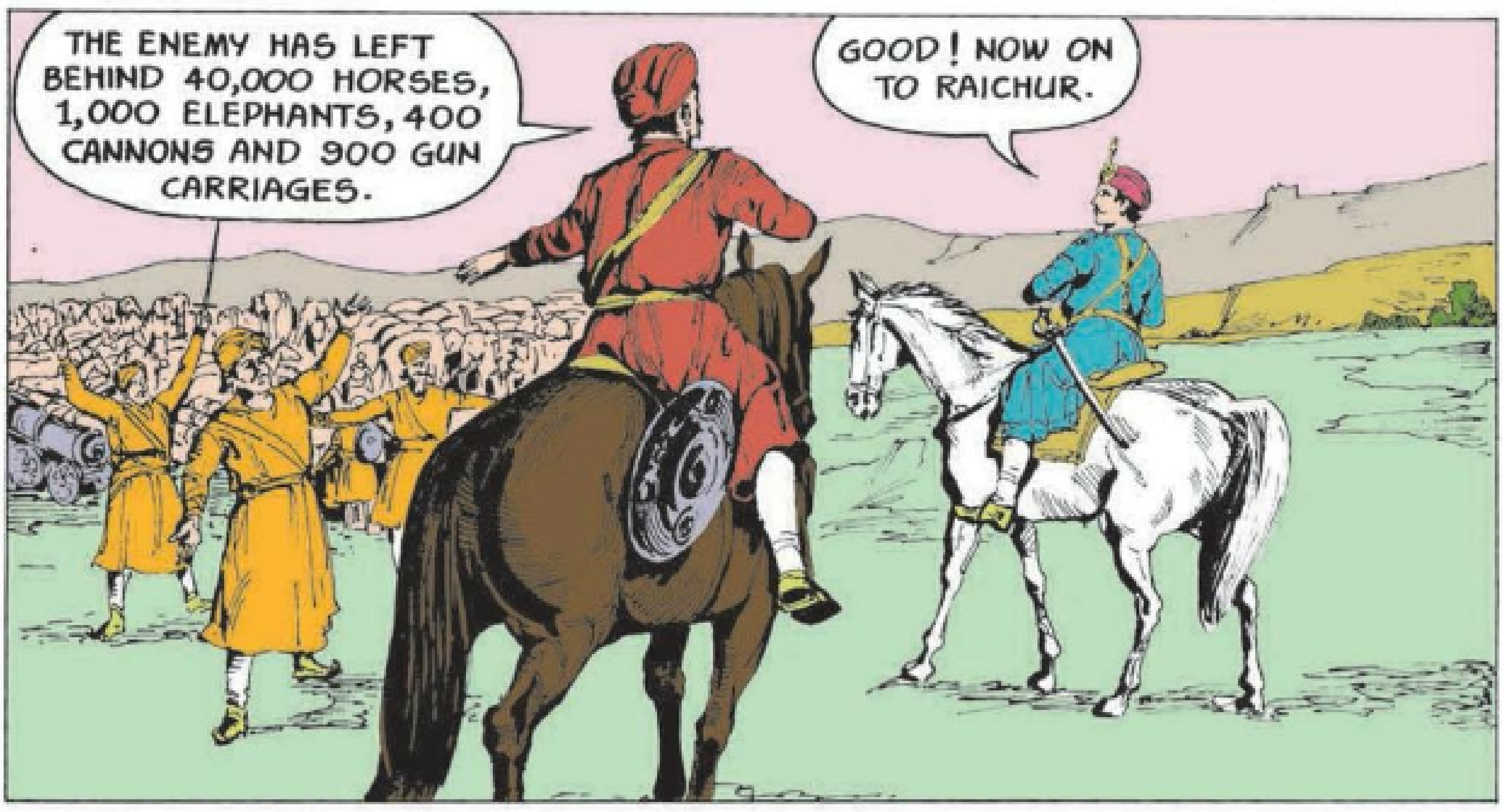


INSPIRED BY HIS WORDS, THE SOLDIERS FOUGHT WITH FRESH CONFIDENCE. NOW THE BIJAPUR ARMY WAS ON THE RUN WITH THE SOLDIERS OF VIJAYANAGARA IN HOT PURSUIT.

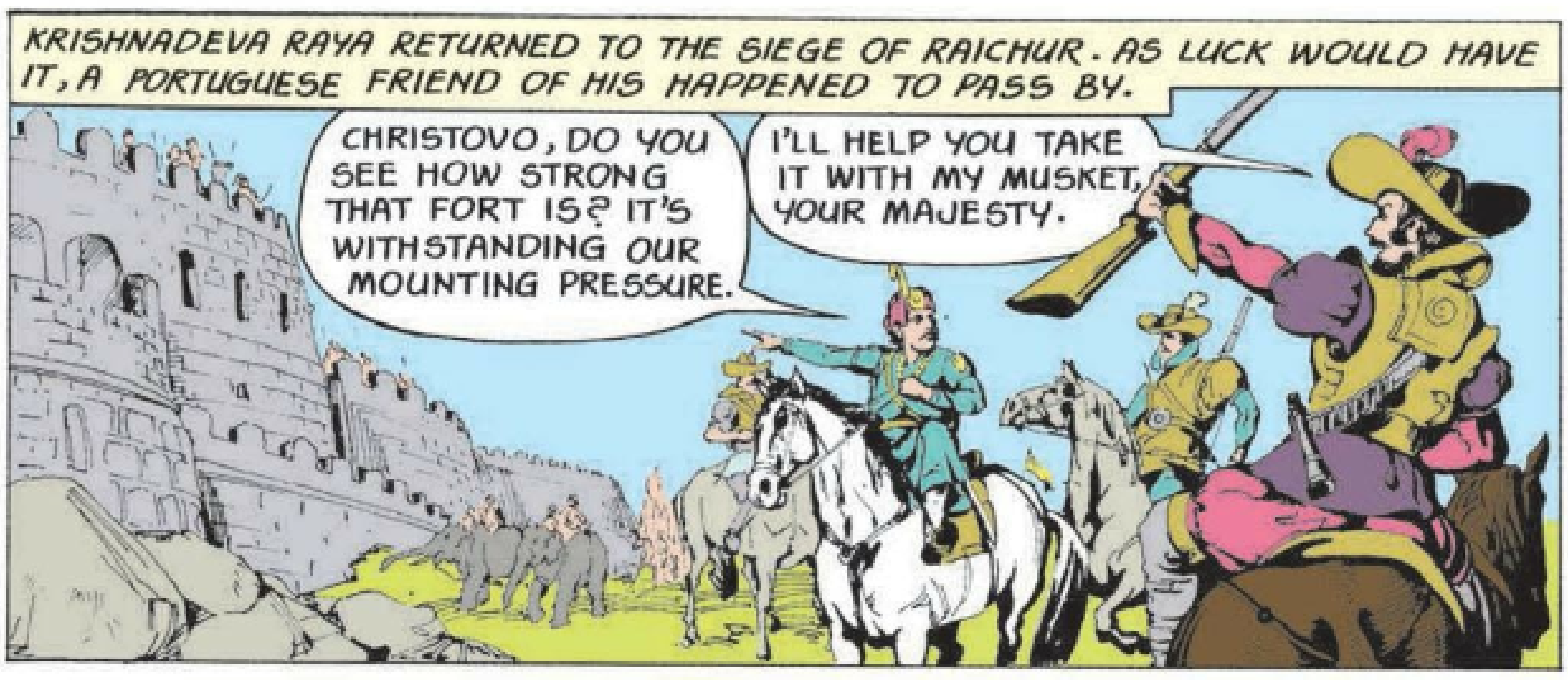


WHILE THOUSANDS OF HIS SOLDIERS AND HORSES FELL INTO THE RIVER WHICH WAS NOW IN SPATE, AND PERISHED, ADIL KHAN HIMSELF GOT AWAY ON AN ELEPHANT.

GOD, LET ME ESCAPE WITH MY LIFE!

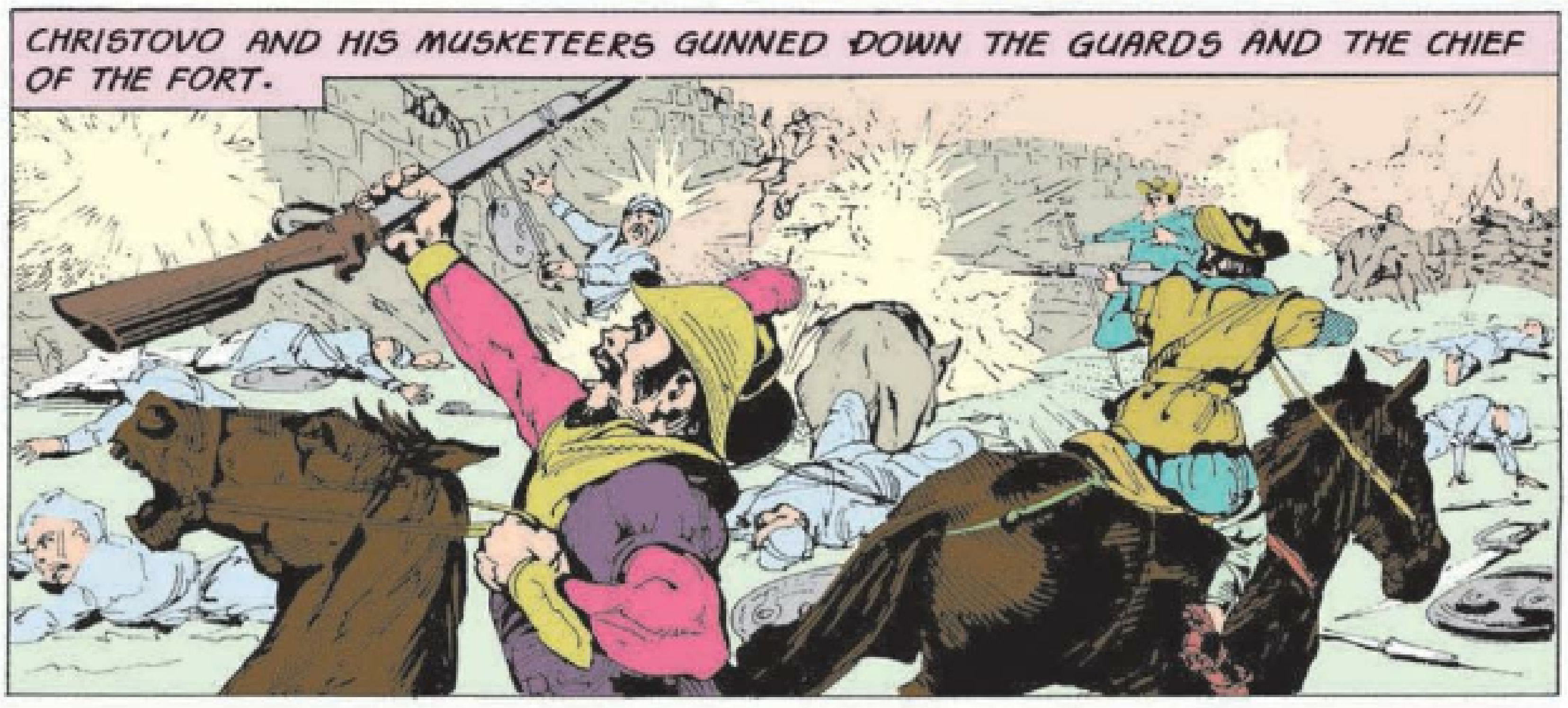


THE ENEMY HAS LEFT BEHIND 40,000 HORSES, 1,000 ELEPHANTS, 400 CANNONS AND 900 GUN CARRIAGES.
GOOD! NOW ON TO RAICHUR.

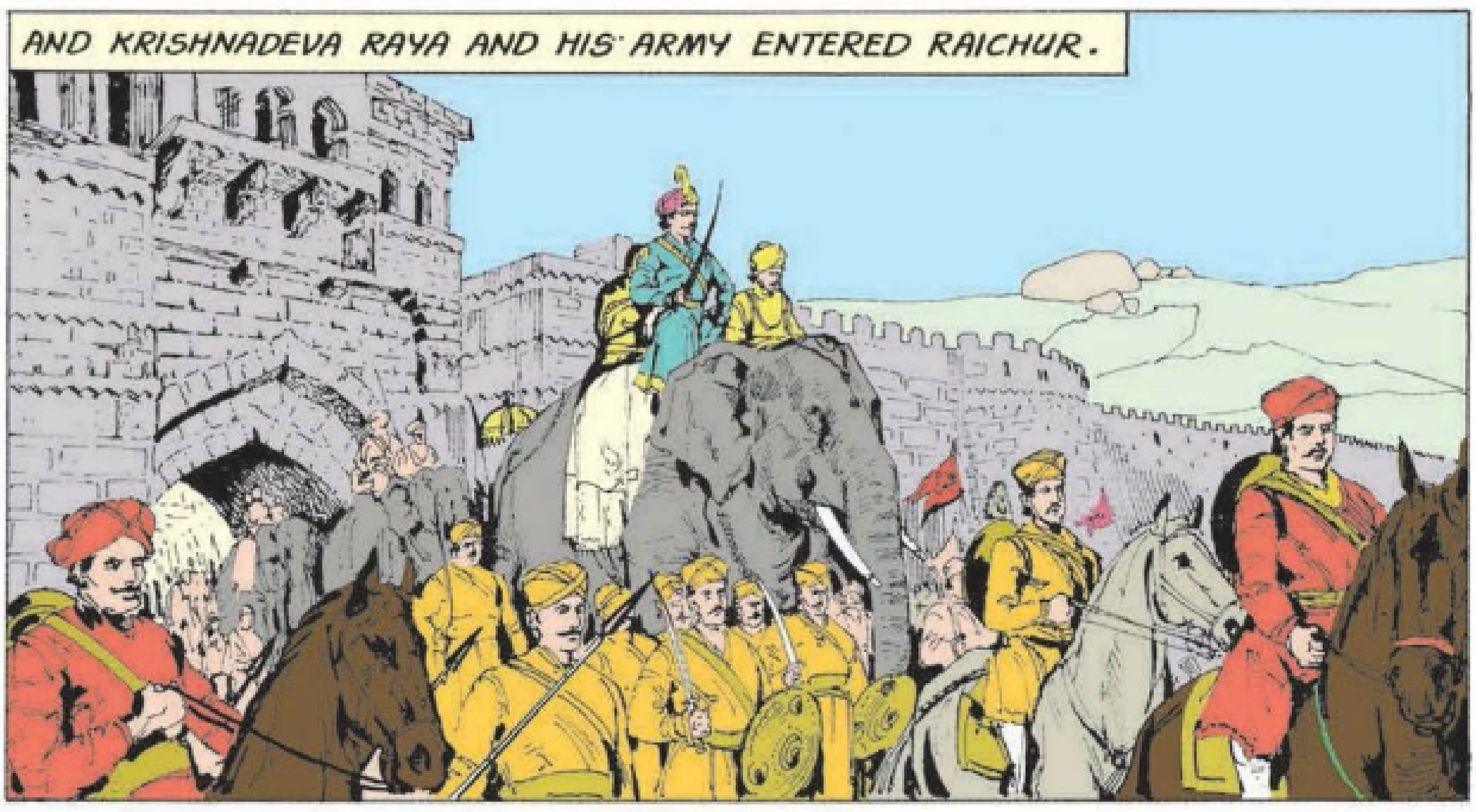


KRISHNADEVA RAYA RETURNED TO THE SIEGE OF RAICHUR. AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, A PORTUGUESE FRIEND OF HIS HAPPENED TO PASS BY.

CHRISTOVO, DO YOU SEE HOW STRONG THAT FORT IS? IT'S WITHSTANDING OUR MOUNTING PRESSURE.
I'LL HELP YOU TAKE IT WITH MY MUSKET, YOUR MAJESTY.

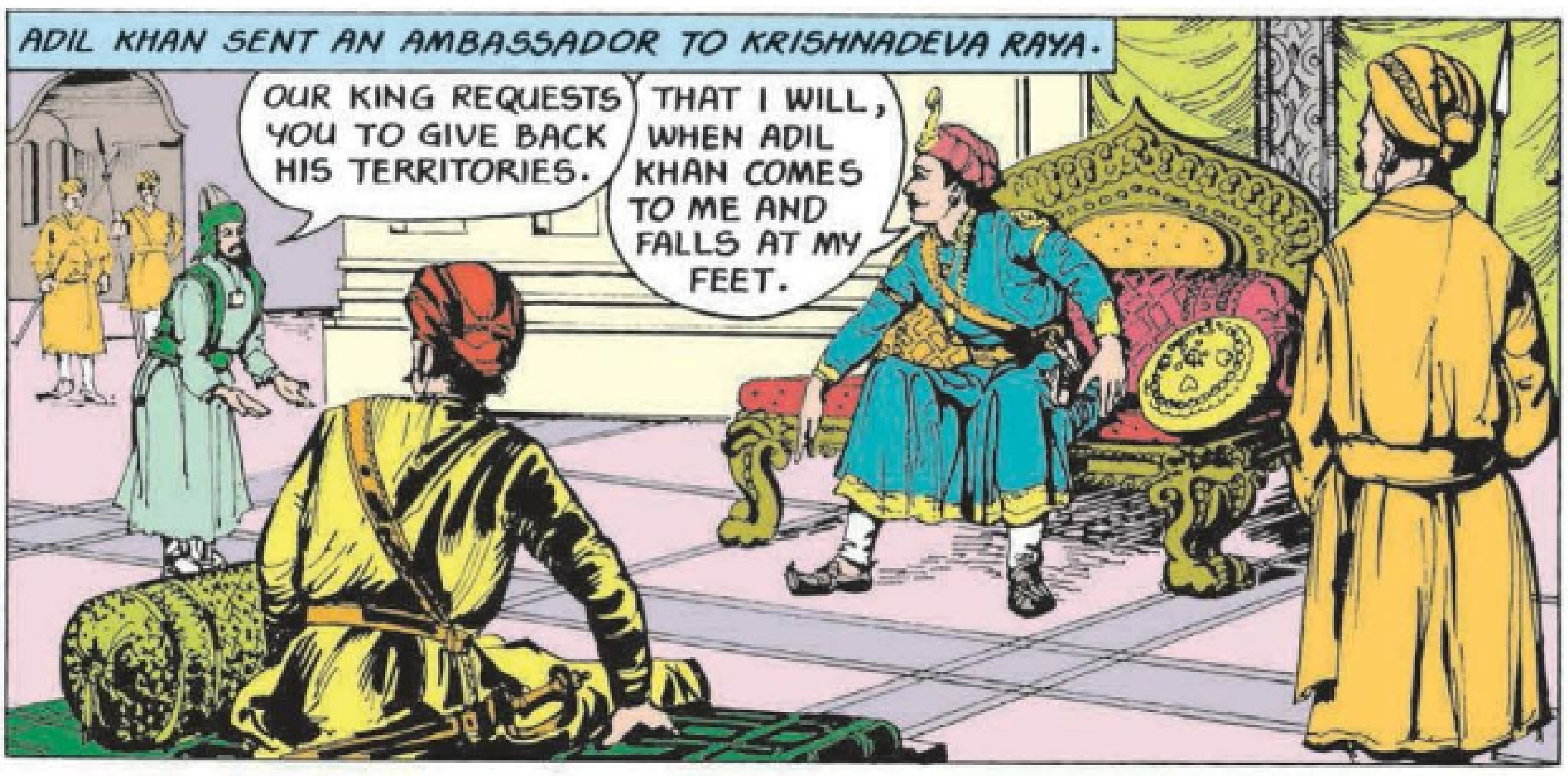


CHRISTOVO AND HIS MUSKETEERS GUNNED DOWN THE GUARDS AND THE CHIEF OF THE FORT.

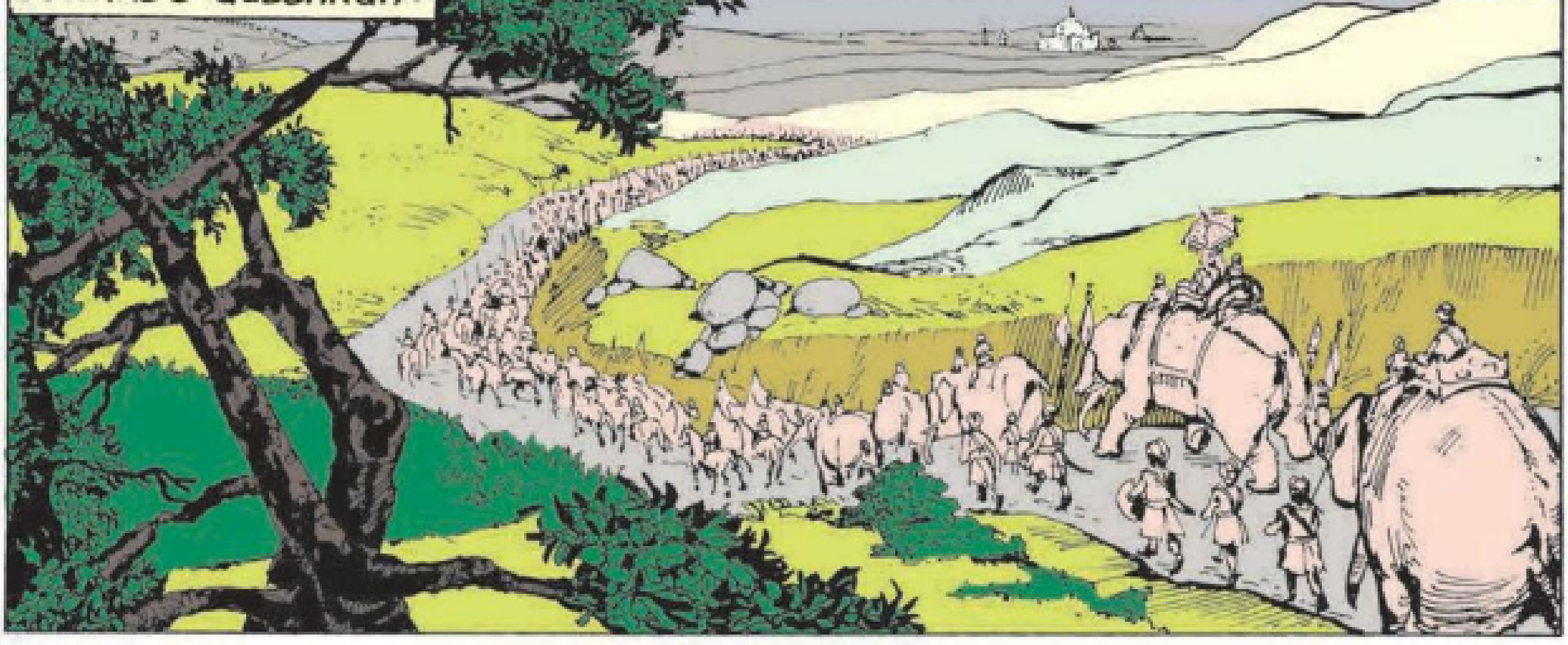


AND KRISHNADEVA RAYA AND HIS ARMY ENTERED RAICHUR.

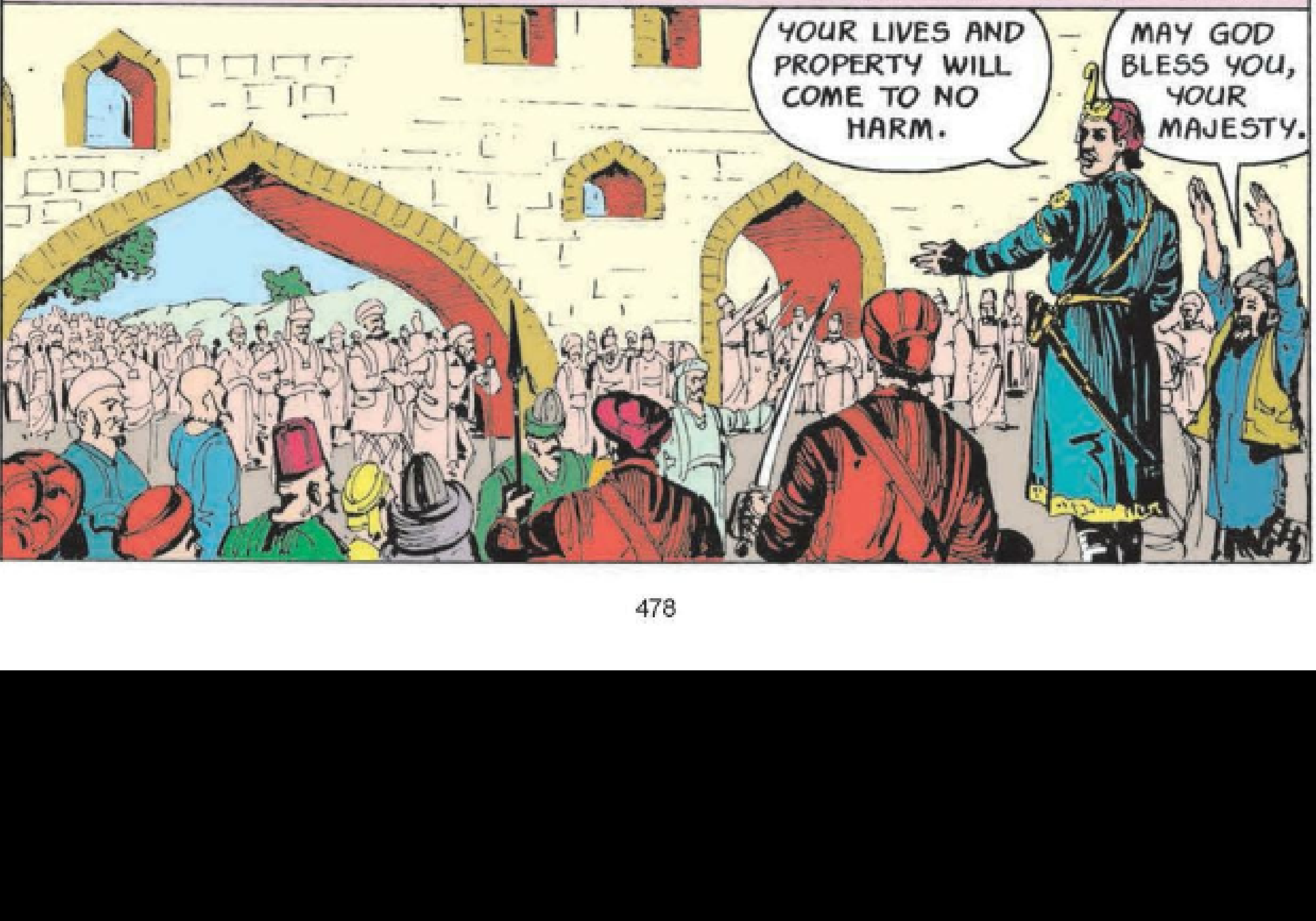
ADIL KHAN SENT AN AMBASSADOR TO KRISHNADEVA RAYA.

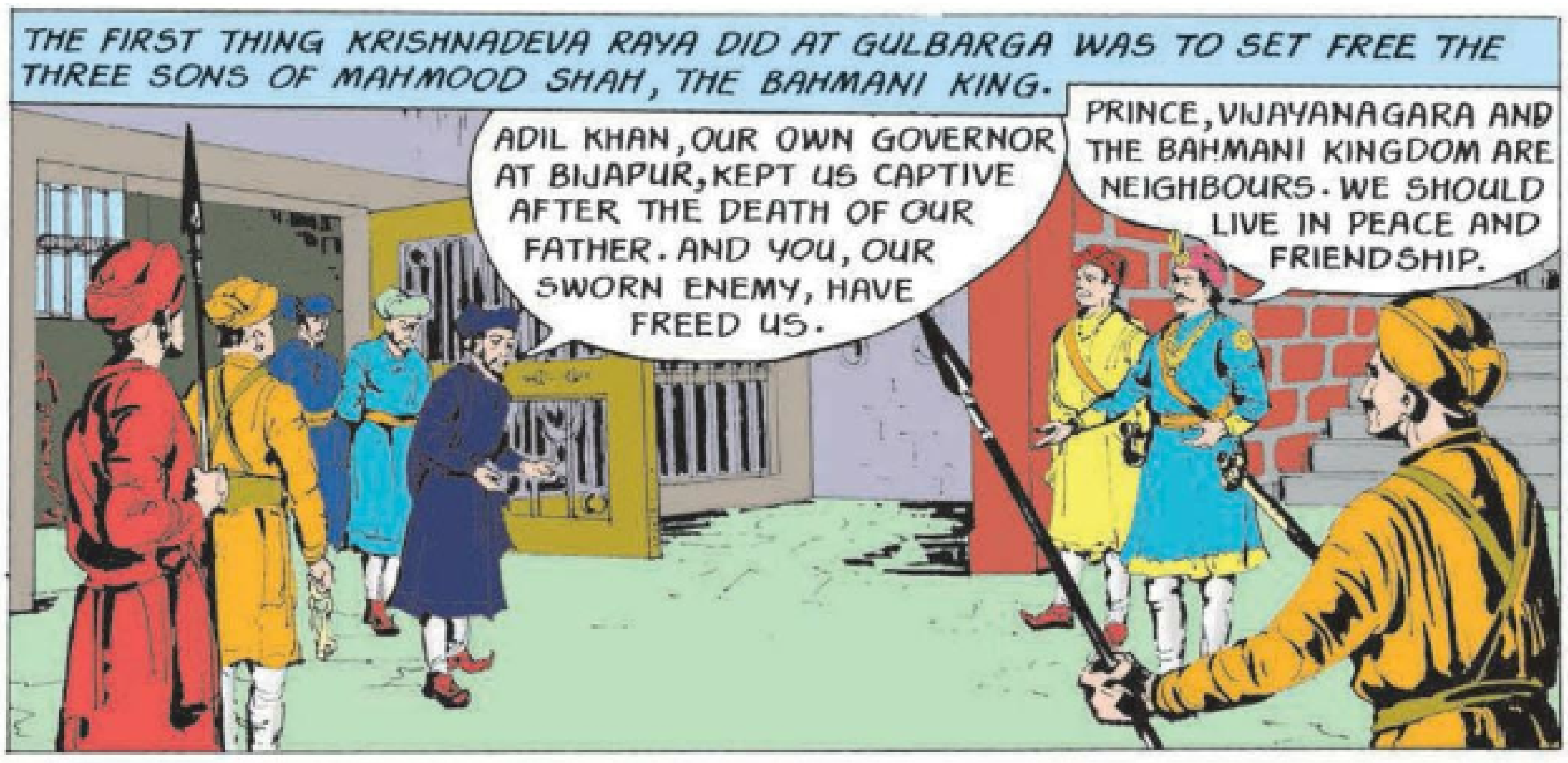

OUR KING REQUESTS YOU TO GIVE BACK HIS TERRITORIES.
THAT I WILL, WHEN ADIL KHAN COMES TO ME AND FALLS AT MY FEET.

ADIL KHAN NATURALLY DIDN'T TURN UP. KRISHNADEVA RAYA'S ARMY MARCHED TOWARDS GULBARGA.



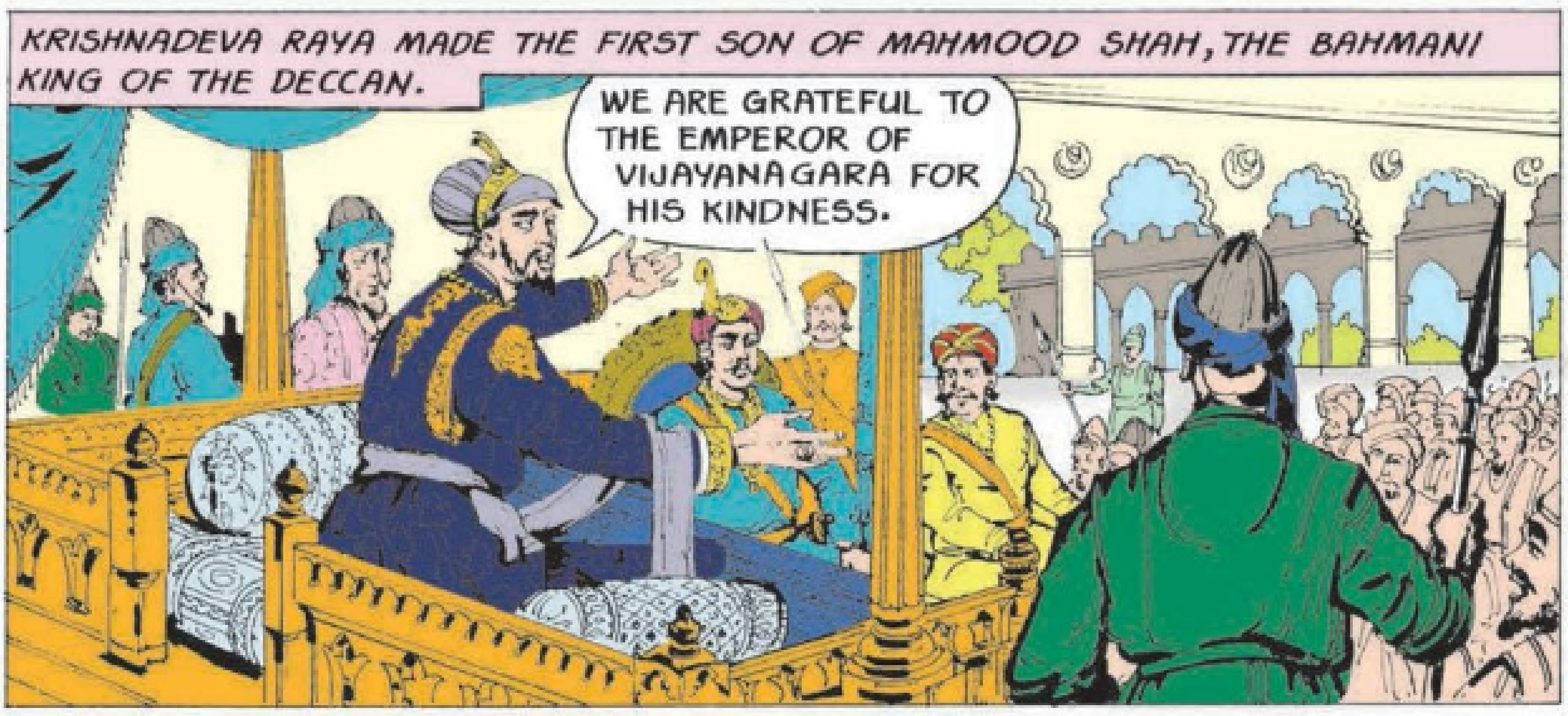
GULBARGA SOON FELL. KRISHNADEVA RAYA GAVE ASSURANCES TO THE CITIZENS.


YOUR LIVES AND PROPERTY WILL COME TO NO HARM.
MAY GOD BLESS YOU, YOUR MAJESTY.



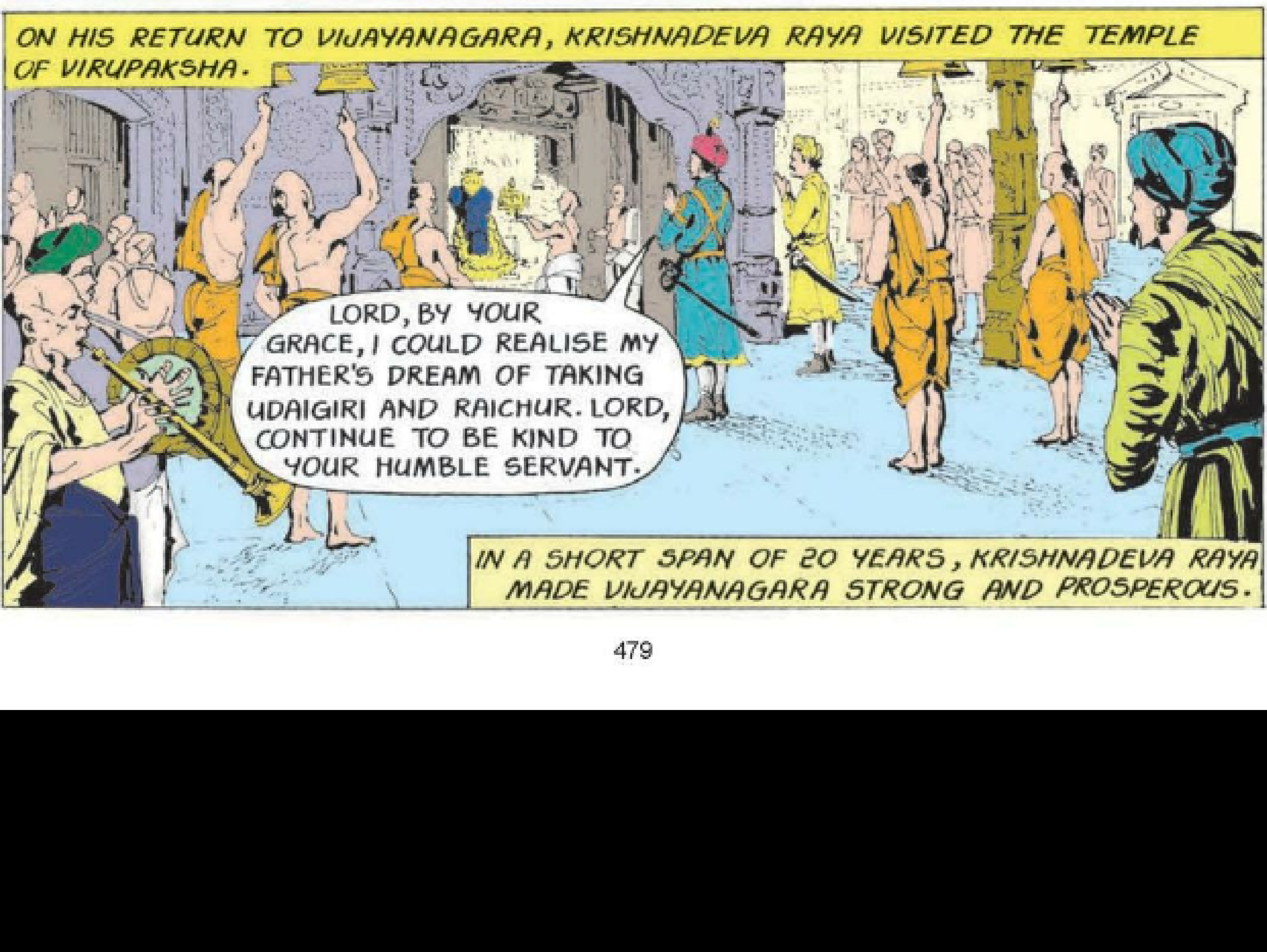
THE FIRST THING KRISHNADEVA RAYA DID AT GULBARGA WAS TO SET FREE THE THREE SONS OF MAHMOOD SHAH, THE BAHMANI KING.

ADIL KHAN, OUR OWN GOVERNOR AT BIJAPUR, KEPT US CAPTIVE AFTER THE DEATH OF OUR FATHER. AND YOU, OUR SWORN ENEMY, HAVE FREED US.
PRINCE, VIJAYANAGARA AND THE BAHMANI KINGDOM ARE NEIGHBOURS. WE SHOULD LIVE IN PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP.



KRISHNADEVA RAYA MADE THE FIRST SON OF MAHMOOD SHAH, THE BAHMANI KING OF THE DECCAN.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE EMPEROR OF VIJAYANAGARA FOR HIS KINDNESS.



ON HIS RETURN TO VIJAYANAGARA, KRISHNADEVA RAYA VISITED THE TEMPLE OF VIRUPAKSHA.

LORD, BY YOUR GRACE, I COULD REALISE MY FATHER'S DREAM OF TAKING UDAIGIRI AND RAICHUR. LORD, CONTINUE TO BE KIND TO YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT.

IN A SHORT SPAN OF 20 YEARS, KRISHNADEVA RAYA MADE VIJAYANAGARA STRONG AND PROSPEROUS.

Legendary Rulers of India

History comes down to us through rulers and leaders – it is they who carve out kingdoms and maintain them. It is through their patronage of poets and historians that we learn of our past. The kings and queens who are still remembered are those whose actions led to the composition of songs and stories, like the 8 thcentury king of Kashmir, Lalitaditya, who was immortalised in the Rajatarangini of Kalhana. And those who documented their reign through engravings as did Ashoka, or in memoirs and biographies, as did Babur and Akbar.

The rulers of this collection have been chosen for the qualities that most endeared them to the people – their justice, their chivalry and their loyalty to their subjects. Some were cunning strategists in battle; others were empire builders, endowed with the vision and foresight to unite the people of an area into a new kingdom. They also, all, had the ability to inspire ordinary people and galvanise them into action.

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